

THE MILITARY POLITICS OF NORTH SUMATRA
DECEMBER 1956 - OCTOBER 1957*

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This paper is concerned with the daerah crisis in North Sumatra between December 1956 and October 1957. The period chosen, like all "periods," is arbitrary; I have adopted it because the events between Col. Simbolon's coup of December 22, 1956 and the complex doings which have the name of the October 19th Affair can be fashioned into a satisfying short story, and because these events can be used to illustrate all the important political forces at work in the area at the time. It is only in this sense that I call these ten or eleven months a period.

It should be made clear, too, what is meant by the statement that this paper is concerned with North Sumatra. Obviously the events described were part of the history of the whole of Indonesia in the same period. North Sumatra is a part of Indonesia; its daerah crisis developed alongside similar crises in other daerah of the country; the course of events there was strongly affected by outside forces: central government policy, Banteng Council policy and so forth. These matters being related, it is of great importance to establish the angle from which they will be viewed. When Chief of Staff Nasution flies to Medan on October 20, 1957 to try to settle the October 19th Affair, it makes a good deal of difference--more than might seem at first glance--whether one positions oneself in Djakarta and sees him leaving for one of many troubled daerah or whether one positions oneself in Medan and sees him arriving to involve himself once more in North Sumatran matters. In this paper I will attempt to look at things from this latter point of view.

The Province of North Sumatra, in December 1956, consisted of three residencies, Atjeh, East Sumatra and Tapanuli (see map). Atjeh, which will not play a very large part in this story, had a population of about one and a half million; it was (and is)

* The original version of this paper was written in the spring of 1958 while I was studying at Cornell under a grant from the Ford Foundation's Foreign Area Fellowship Program. If the present version is an improvement it is due principally to the generosity of Ruth McVey who has loaned me her research notes on a somewhat greater volume of material than I had used and sent me letters of commentary and analysis whose total length is greater than that of my original manuscript. She will recognize much in this article which is hers.



relatively homogeneous ethnically and religiously. Tapanuli, with about one and three quarter million people, was less homogeneous. Mainland Tapanuli is the home of the Batak, particularly of the Toba Batak, the largest and most important element of the Batak group. The North Tapanuli Toba, who were rather unsophisticated hill-dwellers when the first Protestant missionaries reached them in the middle of the 19th century, reacted with unusual vigor to the stimulus of this Western intrusion; in less than a century they had expanded, both geographically into the Residency of East Sumatra, and culturally and socially into a strong position in such fields as education, the civil service and the army, both in North Sumatra and in Indonesia as a whole.¹ This expansion, and the reactions to it among other groups, is the single most important factor in the social background of the events which we will be following in this paper. South Tapanuli, the area of the Mandailing and Angkola Batak (collectively, the Southern Batak) is distinguishable from the Toba areas in several respects, particularly in its conversion to Islam in the decades before the middle of the 19th century, rather than to Christianity as in North Tapanuli. Finally, the Nias Islands are included in Tapanuli, though they have little political significance.

The former residency of East Sumatra, the seat of most of the events covered in this paper, is a region of unusual complexity. Its population of some two and a half million in 1956 consisted of three major groups of roughly equal size: Javanese, Toba Batak, and the original inhabitants (Karo Batak, mainly in the north; Simelungun Batak to the south of them; and Malays along the coast); along with these were substantial minorities of Chinese and Atjehnese. This confusion of populations, like so much else that is complex in East Sumatra, had its roots in the modern economic history of the area. Tobacco, rubber, oil palm and other plantations were what made East Sumatra what it was. They accounted directly for the large Javanese and smaller Chinese populations, which were brought in to work the plantations, and indirectly for a considerable part of the Toba immigration. They made East Sumatra the most important single area of export production in the country (in 1956 it was producing a good half of Indonesia's foreign exchange earnings). They made Medan a great city--in 1956, with over 400,000 inhabitants, the fifth or sixth largest in the country--and the economic, educational, and political metropolis of the whole province. Finally, the slow and painful decay of this plantation system, deprived of its political support by the decline and then elimination of Dutch rule, produced two of the most important and intractable socio-economic problems troubling the residency in 1956. One was a massive movement of Toba, Javanese and indigenous squatters, which had

1. For an excellent field study of this movement see Clark Cunningham, The Postwar Migration and Settlement of the Toba Bataks (New York: IPR, 1958).

reached an estimated half million by 1956, onto estate lands. The other was a fierce conflict between estate managements and plantation workers' unions, principally the Communist-led Sarbupri (Sarekat Buruh Perkebunan Republik Indonesia).²

Socially, too, East Sumatra was tense and divided. I have already mentioned the flow of Toba into East Sumatra's education and civil services. In 1956 a disproportionate share of the teachers, students and civil servants in the residency were Toba, mostly Christians as well, and their preponderance was inevitably resented by others. On a different plane was the problem of the pre-conquest petty rulers of the area--coastal Malay, Karo and Simelungun--who were preserved by the Dutch under indirect rule and fitted into the plantation system, and thus acquired much greater, extra-traditional power and privileges. This class was severely mauled in the "Social Revolution" of East Sumatra which reached a peak in March 1946, reasserted itself between 1947 and 1950 in the Negara Sumatra Timur (the [member] State of East Sumatra, in the Dutch-organized federal system for Indonesia) and was finally dug out of the political structure in 1950. But its social influence, and feelings against it, were still important in 1956.

The demographic, economic and social issues inevitably had political consequences. To take an outstanding example, the Toba influx and Toba predominance in prestigious positions made many of the indigenous East Sumatrans yearn for a turning back of the clock. This growing desire took political form in September 1956 with the formation of the Kongres Rakjat Sumatra Timur (KRST--East Sumatra People's Congress) which aimed at an "autonomous" East Sumatra, that is, political and administrative separation of the Residencies of Tapanuli and East Sumatra. As this campaign developed in the course of 1957 it naturally aroused a Toba response, but it also drew in political energies generated in other spheres of socio-economic tension. Thus opponents of the KRST accused it of fronting for the old indirect rulers of the colonial era, and the PKI, whose strength lay among organized plantation workers and squatters, became deeply involved in the anti-"autonomy" movement.

East Sumatra in 1956 was politically divided in organizational terms as well as on issues. Four major parties stood out above a crowd of smaller ones: three of the national big four (PNI, PKI and Masjumi) and Parkindo (Partai Keristen Indonesia--Indonesian Christian [Protestant] Party) representing chiefly the Toba. It is noticeable, however, that party politics as such did not play much of a role in the events we shall be looking at. Everywhere in Indonesia in 1957 formal political

2. Karl Pelzer, "The Agrarian Conflict in East Sumatra," Pacific Affairs (30) June 1957, pp. 151-159.

machinery was increasingly neglected in favor of either mass action or military maneuver, and in this respect, at least, North Sumatra was entirely typical.

Laid over this society like a thin wet sheet over a body, picking up a perfect imprint of the complexities of its shape, was the Bukit Barisan Division, incorporated in the Tentara dan Territorium I (TT-I, First Military Region). In all respects--its territorial arrangement, the ethnic background of its troops and officers, and their political leanings--it was not so much a division of the Indonesian Army as the military element in and of North Sumatra. The great majority of its men and officers had first taken up arms in North Sumatra in the Revolutionary days; they had fought in North Sumatra as the military arm of the Revolution; and with the transfer of sovereignty they stayed on in North Sumatra, constituting a military organization outside the civil structure and yet parallel to it. In 1956 and after, when the civil structure showed signs of being unable to stand the strains being placed on it, the division was still there. As a North Sumatran organization, it was able to absorb civil authority in North Sumatra more naturally and with less of a shock than if it had been a professional army of the Western type. As a North Sumatran organization, too, it was able to carry on the politics of North Sumatra, which fell into its hands along with civil authority. It is from this viewpoint that the events which we are going to follow are best seen.

As of December 1956, TT-I was organized as follows. It had a headquarters in Medan, also the seat of the Governor of North Sumatra. Attached to this there were artillery, armored, military police and other special units. On the next level, it had four regiments. The First Regiment was coterminous with the residency of Atjeh, the Second with the residency of East Sumatra, and the Third with the residency of Tapanuli. The Fourth Regiment, because of the odd fact that Sumatra had three provinces but only two military regions, covered an area entirely outside the Province of North Sumatra--the northern part of Central Sumatra. There are no figures available on the strengths of these units, but it is doubtful whether the whole Bukit Barisan Division had much more than about 10,000 men, of whom the greater number were in the areas of the Second Regiment, because of the importance of East Sumatra, and the First Regiment, because of the three years' old Daud Beureueh rebellion in Atjeh. Finally the KMKB Medan (Komando Militer Kota Besar Medan--City Military Command), because of the size of the units belonging to it and the political significance of the city itself, had the same kind of role and weight as the four regiments.

At this time the Panglima (a word somewhat weakly translated as Commanding Officer) of TT-I was Colonel Maludin Simbolon, a

Christian Toba Batak who had held the post since 1950 and was one of the most prestigious officers in the Indonesian Army. On the national political scene he had several times--most notably in the October 17th, 1952 and the June 27th, 1955 Affairs--played a major role in the opposition to Sukarno. During 1955 he had been one of the three or four leading candidates for Chief of Staff of the Army, the office to which Nasution was eventually reappointed at the end of that year. Since the middle of 1956, in part because of these past events, Simbolon had been slated for replacement. Up to the middle of November his substitute was to have been Colonel Zulkifli Lubis, a Mandailing Batak, a political ally of his in the June 27th Affair and later, and at that time Vice Chief of Staff of the Army. But with Lubis' attempted coup in Djakarta on November 16th and subsequent retreat into hiding, this arrangement had to be changed.³ On November 25th Nasution called Simbolon to Djakarta and persuaded him to agree to being replaced by Lt. Djamin Gintings, a Karo Batak and former commander of the Second Regiment, who had been appointed Chief of Staff of TT-I in March 1956. Simbolon showed his extreme reluctance by asking for delays and his resentment by criticizing Nasution publicly on other issues. During the month which followed, Nasution kept up the pressure; eventually it was understood that the transfer would take place on December 28th. This deadline was one of the chief factors in urging Simbolon into his coup on December 22nd.⁴

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3. This paper can only touch briefly on events and situations in Djakarta and other daerah, which nevertheless have considerable relevance to what was going on in North Sumatra. For further information in such cases see Herbert Feith, The Decline of Constitutional Democracy in Indonesia (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1962).
 4. This greatly simplifies the complex politics of replacing Simbolon. For more on Zulkifli Lubis, including his actual arrival in Medan on September 14th for a formal transfer of command ceremony which did not come off, see Waspada, July 3, August 20, September 12, 14, 15, 29, 1956. For rumors that Simbolon's replacement would be Dahlan Djambek, see Sin Po, November 26, 1956. In late November and early December it seems to have been understood that Gintings was to be only a stopgap, pending the discovery of a regular panglima for TT-I. For an explicit statement of this by an Army Headquarters spokesman see Harian Rakjat, November 27, 1956. This provides a useful clue for understanding Gintings' behavior and position during Simbolon's coup and in 1957. For a general picture of these transactions see Prime Minister Ali Sastroamidjojo's report to Parliament on January 21 1957: Kementerian Penerangan, Keterangan Pemerintah tentang kejadian2 di Sumatera dalam bulan Desember 1956 (Djakarta, 1957), with twenty-one of the documents in the whole case appended. [Hereafter this source will be referred to as Kempen, Kejadian2 di Sumatera.] A generally reliable English translation appears in PIA,

The commanders of the major units under Simbolon's command must also be mentioned, for they will all play a part in the events to come. In December 1956 the commander of the First Regiment (Atjeh) was Lt. Col. Sjamaun Gaharu, himself an Atjehnese who had played a leading role in military affairs in Atjeh during the first half year of the Revolution before suffering a coup. Gaharu had only just returned to Atjeh as regimental commander the previous May, after a decade away from home. The commander of the Second Regiment (East Sumatra) was Lt. Col. Abdul Wahab Makmour, a Moslem but otherwise of obscure background--he was apparently part Karo, part Atjehnese and had been born on the west coast of North Sumatra where Tapanuli marches on Atjeh. Makmour was sometimes said during the events of 1957 to be a PKI member or at least a Communist sympathizer, but his actions can be satisfactorily accounted for on other assumptions as well. This creates difficulties which I will discuss later on. The commander of the Third Regiment (Tapanuli) was Major Junus Samosir, a Christian Toba, recently appointed, like Gaharu and Makmour, as well as Sugiharto (below). The commander of the Fourth Regiment (Central Sumatra) was Lt. Col. Ahmad Husein, a Minangkabau. Finally the commander of the KMKB Medan, the fifth of the major units under TT-I, was Lt. Col. Sugiharto, a Javanese who had been raised in Bandung and had spent most of his military career in West Java.

To give these seven names and to indicate their background is to give only a sketch of the distribution of power in TT-I on the eve of Simbolon's coup. For one thing, as the events of 1957 were to show, the men holding these seven highest offices were by no means the only ones with a say in what happened in TT-I. Newspaper reports alone mention several dozen officers of lower rank playing obviously important roles in the events we are concerned with, and a full analysis would require further information about these, and many others, which would be very difficult to acquire.

For another, the distribution of positions--in the middle and lower ranks as well as the top ones given above--was far from stable or permanent. Things had been much more stable between 1950 and 1955, but during 1956 new forces were at work: at the national level, a country-wide reshuffling of army posts being carried on by the new Chief of Staff Nasution, at the local level an effervescence of ethnic and factional sentiment to be discussed in a moment. We have already seen that five of the top seven posts in TT-I had been transferred to new hands during 1956; the same is true of nine of the eleven next highest posts

January 22, 1957, morning edition. [Hereafter, PIA's morning edition will be cited as M, the afternoon edition as A.]

in the division,⁵ and similar high percentages may well have prevailed in lower-ranking positions about which there is less information.

Finally, in surveying the distribution of military strength in North Sumatra, one must keep in mind that the origins of the Indonesian army were historical, not bureaucratic, and that the Bukit Barisan Division was simply a partly-institutionalized section of the Revolutionary movement. Outside the army, in the gap between the military and civilian roles which we more sharply distinguish, were tens of thousands of pedjuang (freedom fighters) who claimed a special role in the affairs of the Republic they had fought for and who, when conditions were right, could be mobilized by their former leaders both inside and outside the army. In 1956, after five fairly tidy years, conditions were becoming more nearly right.

Those five years had ended symbolically with the elections of late 1955, the anticipation of which had muffled discontent and whose arrival had released it again, more powerful for the delay. The events dealt with in this paper took place in a context determined by the surprisingly rapid decay and then collapse of the regime under which Indonesia had been governed since 1950. We are accustomed to following this process during 1956 from a Djakarta point of view. In this perspective the main features are a steady decline in the civilian government's authority and, as a natural response to this deepening vacuum of power, the rise of two countervailing forces: a daerah movement directed against the center, and an army movement directed at replacing civilians in authority in both the center and the regions.⁶ Events in North Sumatra in 1956 and 1957 fit easily into this framework. North Sumatra took its place among other daerah whose more or less independent action, under military leadership, both resulted from and helped cause the decline of parliamentary rule in the country.

5. The eleven posts I have in mind here were the Vice Chief of Staff, the Assistants in charge of staff sections I through V, and the Chiefs of Staff of the four regiments plus KMKB Medan. For some of the reports of transfers inside TT-I during 1956 see Waspada (1956) March 24, 28, 31; April 5; July 3, 7, 17 (long list); August 3, 4, 11, 24; September 19. See also Sin Po, November 26, 1956.

6. This is again a drastically simplified picture of a complex nation-wide development. Most writers, for example, would include Sukarno's forward movement along with those of the daerah and the army when describing this process. I exclude it because it was not nearly so relevant to the concerns of this paper as the other two.

The view from Medan is necessarily different. In relation to Djakarta Medan was daerah, but inside North Sumatra it was the capital, and it was afflicted with the same problems as Djakarta: daerahism at residency or lower levels, rising suku (ethnic) tensions, officers discontented with the status quo. The same event, therefore, is likely to look very different according to whether it is being viewed from Djakarta or Medan.

To illustrate this point, and at the same time to describe the first major break with the status quo in North Sumatra, it is worth going into some detail on the Teluk Nibung smuggling affair between about January and July 1956. In the beginning, one source claims, this was a private arrangement between a Medan businessman, Chin Hock, and Simbolon. Chin Hock did the smuggling--substantial quantities of rubber to Malaya--while Simbolon protected him and shared in the proceeds. The story became known to officers in the division, however, and to protect himself Simbolon called in all regimental and battalion commanders and offered to include them in the project, saying that he had been doing this to collect money to build barracks and otherwise improve conditions for the soldiers in TT-I. (These motives were also advanced as justification for the second phase of the smuggling.) The commanders agreed, but only after setting various conditions, including ones concerning personnel, to which Simbolon consented.⁷

7. The only source I know of for this story is the statement by the press officer of TT-I, Capt. Matang Sitepu, on February 19, 1957 (PIA February 20 (A), 1957; Harian Rakjat, February 21, 1957). Sitepu was an interested party, speaking for anti-Simbolon forces in the division after the failure of Simbolon's coup. But the story gains credence from two further events. The first is that one of the many personnel transfers in mid-1956 was the appointment of Major Lahiradja Munthe to head of Section IV of TT-I headquarters. Munthe (then acting commander of the First Regiment) was specifically singled out by Sitepu among the commanders who insisted on conditions from Simbolon in the bargaining mentioned above, and Section IV of the staff and Munthe himself were mentioned specifically in the reportage for the last months of 1956 as supervising the distribution of the Teluk Nibung proceeds. The second is an incident which began on February 13th 1956, when Major Boyke Nainggolan (then commanding the 131st Battalion in Medan) took action on his own to arrest a number of officers, including Lt. Col. Ibrahim Adjie (then division Chief of Staff) and Major Junus Samosir (then commander of KMKB Medan) on charges of corruption. The incident was settled with Djakarta army headquarters playing a part in the negotiations. Among the changes which appear to have been part of the solution were

The second phase of the smuggling was much larger and soon became known to the public. Between May 15th and June 5th TT-I under Simbolon arranged for the illegal shipping to Malaya of very large quantities of rubber from the small East Sumatran port of Teluk Nibung. Smuggling it was, technically, but of a peculiar sort, since Simbolon notified various high officials in Djakarta in advance. This added to the political impact of the event when the smuggling became known in the course of June, because it showed not only that TT-I was disposed to massive violation of the law but also that the government, or at least those of its high officials who had been told, seemed incapable of stopping it. Later, once the affair was out in the open, the government did stop TT-I from any further Teluk Nibungs, but equally it punished no one and left the proceeds in TT-I's hands.⁸

These were the circumstances. From the Djakarta point of view it was the second phase which was the significant one and this was a straightforward and typical story of military-led daerah defiance and governmental weakness, closely comparable to the Sulawesi copra-smuggling incident at about the same time. From the Medan point of view both phases were important, but they cast light in different directions. The second phase had the same significance as it had for Djakarta, but upside down. The first phase, however, gives a graphic picture of changing relationships within the officer group of TT-I. In particular it suggests that Simbolon's five-year rule of TT-I was breaking up. If Nainggolan's attempted arrests were directed against the smuggling, this was most unsettling for Simbolon; at any rate the role of Army Headquarters in the aftermath of the affair (helping or interfering) was a bad sign for him, as were the subsequent transfers.⁹ Certainly the confrontation with his subordinate

the sending of Nainggolan abroad for study (March), Gintings' replacing Adjie as Chief of Staff (March) and Samosir's shift to the command of the Third Regiment (August). (Waspada, February 13, 15, 19, 20, 22, 1956.) These reports do not say what corruption Nainggolan had in mind, but the seriousness of the incident and particularly its timing make it seem likely that it was the first phase of the smuggling.

8. On the second phase see Boyd Compton, "Army Smuggling, North Sumatra," Newsletter of the Institute of Current World Affairs, July 13, 1956; Feith, op. cit., pp. 498-500; and the original version of this paper, p. 4. These and other accounts make no mention of what is called here the first phase, the present description of which is based on research by Ruth McVey.
9. His ally Samosir was replaced in the strategic command of KMKB Medan by Sugiharto, one of the leaders of the subsequent counter-coup against him; Gintings was promoted to Chief of Staff and thereby became a leading candidate to replace him. The connection, if any, between the smuggling and the other transfers in 1956 is not clear; at any rate these transfers,

officers demanding to be included in the operation, their hard bargaining there, and Munthe's subsequent appearance in a post which enabled him to keep an eye on the Teluk Nibung proceeds, do not suggest a secure panglima. Finally, in the light of the above, the whole large second phase of the smuggling has the look of an effort by Simbolon to carry his restive officers with him by uniting them in defiance of Djakarta and distributing very large sums (the bulk of the proceeds) directly to or through them.¹⁰

From Teluk Nibung we can proceed to the immediate background of Simbolon's coup on December 22nd. The first open sign of regionalist activity in Sumatra came with a well-publicized reunion of the old revolutionary Banteng Division of Central Sumatra, dissolved in 1950 but still a potent unifying force for both military and political leaders in the area. This meeting, held under the leadership of Lt. Col. Husein of the Fourth Regiment between November 20th and 24th, made it quite clear that Central Sumatrans were prepared to take strong action unless Djakarta proved more cooperative, and it set the pattern for similar reunions throughout the Outer Islands in the ensuing months.

The Banteng Division reunion, representing a socially quite homogeneous area, is easily described: a compact group presenting a quite clear-cut demand and implicit threat to the central government. Its counterpart in TT-I as a whole understandably is not. There, on December 4th, a meeting was held of many of the officers under Simbolon's command, including several from Husein's regiment, to discuss what should be done about the current situation. Out of this meeting emerged something later called the "December 4th Idea," conveying a sense of urgency and expressing a desire felt throughout Indonesia at that time for some sort of radical reforming action.¹¹

too, were on balance unfavorable to Simbolon's interests (e.g., Makmour, another subsequent leader of the counter-coup, became commander of the Second Regiment; Gaharu was the first Atjehnese to be appointed commander of the First Regiment and was thereby enabled to link daerahism and military strength for the first time).

10. For purported figures on the size of these distributions, ranging between five and nine million rupiah per regiment (and KMKB Medan), see Matang Sitepu's statement cited in note 7 above. The Medan-centered perspective and the picture of Simbolon's declining authority rendered above were suggested to me by Ruth McVey.
11. It was this widespread disillusionment and dissatisfaction with the current state of affairs which formed the psychological background for such dissimilar and opposed movements as Sukarno's Guided Democracy and the regionalist coups. With the weight of established institutions thus pressing

There is conflicting evidence as to who took the initiative in proposing the meeting and the December 4th Idea. On the one hand Ali Sastroamidjojo, in his parliamentary statement of January 21st, gives the impression that it was largely of Simbolon's doing.¹² Certainly Simbolon had reason to try to create a platform from which he could launch his coup. He had returned from his last interview with Nasution on November 27th knowing that within a month or so, if he succeeded in doing nothing, he would have to give up his position to Gintings. He also had before him the successful example of Husein in leading the Banteng Division meeting into an advanced regionalist position. On the other hand, it is clear that at least the original text of the Idea was drawn up by a group of graduates of the SSKAD (Sekolah Staf dan Komando Angkatan Darat--Army Staff and Command School) called the "Team SSKAD, TT-I."¹³ The Team's function is not altogether clear--it may have been a standing committee of all SSKAD graduates in TT-I, or it may have been an ad hoc group of them which is known to have returned from a general SSKAD meeting in Java a few days earlier--and neither is its full membership. But reported members of it were mostly actively anti-Simbolon and so were three of the five members of a committee of SSKAD graduates, headed by Lt. Col. Makmour, which was established on December 4th to review and refine the Idea.¹⁴

We need not go much further into the complicated history of the Idea. It is evident that the notion of radical action was in

more lightly on political life, men were freer to devise new forms and naturally reached toward ones which were in accordance with their needs and ambitions.

12. Kempen, Kedjadian2 di Sumatera, in PIA, January 22(M), 1957. On November 27th Simbolon instructed the officers of TT-I to work out a constitutional concept which would be suitable for the Republic. (See his press interview with Majors Munthe and Zein Hamid as contained e.g. in Harian Rakjat, January 15, 1957.)
13. Agreed to by both opponents and supporters of Simbolon. Compare the statements of Makmour (Waspada, January 22, 1957) and Gaharu (PIA, January 16 (A), 1957). SSKAD (located in Bandung) had felt for some time that it had a special competence in the field of Army ideology. It was also very active in the national-level military politics of this period.
14. The committee may also have composed the draft discussed on December 4th. Its members were Makmour, Major Munthe, Major Nelang Sembiring, Major J. Rambe and Capt. M. Sjafai, the first three opponents, the last two supporters of Simbolon at this time (Waspada, January 25, 1957). Makmour emerged as an outspoken opponent of Simbolon in this period. Waspada (January 2, 1957) reports him as heading a list of more than sixty signers of a protest on November 17th against Simbolon's

the air; officers of all persuasions could agree on the need for it and would not want to be left out while it was being discussed. Certainly all parties were involved in the busy round of meetings and negotiations which followed in the next twelve days and maneuvered through the proceedings for a way to impose a wording or interpretation of the Idea which would be useful for their side.¹⁵

On December 16th twenty-seven leading officers of the TT-I met again and adopted a formal statement of the December 4th Idea, embodied in what was called the *Ikrar Bersama* (Collective Vow).¹⁶ The *Ikrar Bersama* is an interesting study in political semantics; it is an elegant fretwork of national symbols (the Independence Proclamation of 1945, the Pantjasila, Bhinneka Tunggal Ika) and lofty wording, capped by an operative sentence ("We have agreed to take firm and revolutionary measures to realize the ideals [of the Independence Proclamation] in the shortest possible time.")--which was open to almost any interpretation. In TT-I nothing so clear and incisive as the Banteng Division statement of November 24th was possible; instead we get a formula representing the lowest common denominator of agreement among the factions, a formula so vague that it was used in the following months by all factions to support their causes.

After swearing this *Ikrar Bersama*, the officers then drank a toast and smashed their glasses to symbolize their break with the old ways. Four days later, on December 20th, Lt. Col. Husein began the break, by announcing that the Banteng Council had taken over in Central Sumatra. With this, Central Sumatra passes out of the main line of events in TT-I and becomes, from

November 14th protest against Nasution's handling of Zulkifli Lubis. Apart from sources cited in other notes, see also PIA, January 14(A) and 16(M), 1957, for further details.

15. By the end the issue seems to have boiled down to the very practical question of whether Simbolon should have a free hand in interpreting the Idea in action he might take on its basis, or whether he should be subject to restrictions, as his opponents wanted. Simbolon seems to have won full freedom, but also thereby full responsibility. The dispute broke out again in mid-January when his opponents charged that his coup was an improper application of the Idea. See the remarks by opponents Prime Minister Ali (PIA, January 22(M), 1957) Munthe and Zein Hamid (PIA, January 14(A), 1957) and by supporters Samosir (PIA, January 16(M), 1957) and Gaharu (PIA, January 16(A), 1957).
16. For the text of the *Ikrar Bersama* see Waspada, January 24, 1957 and PIA, January 24(M), 1957 (the latter with a partial list of signers). According to Waspada, January 25, 1957, 27 officers signed on December 16th, and the final total of 48 was achieved over the next week as Simbolon called in officers one by one to do so.

the Medan point of view, as much of an outside force as Djakarta. It was only an accident of military organization that had brought the distant Fourth Regiment area into TT-I in the first place, and these events made quick work of the connection.

Simbolon followed Husein by only a little more than a day. Early in the morning of December 22nd, he announced over the Medan radio that he was cutting off relations with the Central Government temporarily and assuming authority over the area of TT-I.¹⁷ He criticized the behavior of the politicians of the center and said that he no longer recognized the authority of the present Cabinet; he added, however, that if a good cabinet were formed, he would return authority to it. He was careful to emphasize that he was still faithful to the Independence Proclamation of 1945 and was not setting up a separate state.¹⁸

On the same day Simbolon declared a state of war and siege (SOB) over his territory and announced the construction of an elaborate piece of government machinery consisting of a "Revolutionary Command," headed by himself, and a "Gadjah Command," headed by Gintings, who was to double as Military Governor. These organs were flanked by four different advisory councils and a "Revolutionary Cabinet."¹⁹

How are we to see this drastic move by Simbolon? It is surprising how different it looks from Djakarta and Medan. In a Djakarta-centered history it is a daerah coup, alongside so many others already accomplished or about to come, only more serious in its implications for the status quo because of the great importance of the East Sumatran export industries. In the perspective of North Sumatran history, despite the obvious possibilities of greater autonomy, it is just the reverse. Simbolon's coup, in local terms, was essentially a desperate effort to shore up the now tottering status quo of the 1950-55 period: for Simbolon himself, of course, to hold on to his command; for the Toba to forestall the replacement of a Toba with a Karo panglima, who could reasonably be expected to use the great powers of that

17. Including the Fourth Regiment area. Simbolon's martial law decree also covered Husein's territory. But there is no evidence that this was more than a matter of form. The Banteng Council was a Central Sumatra organization and had no reason to take orders from Medan. The dissolving logic of daerahism made it inevitable that Simbolon and Husein should part company as panglima and subordinate officer, though they continued as political allies.

18. Kempen, Kedjadian2 di Sumatera, pp. 59-61, gives the text of this announcement.

19. Waspada, December 26, 1956 gives the anatomy of this new government and the names of most of its office-holders.

office to try to reduce Toba predominance in East Sumatra; for most of those, civilian and military, whose jobs or interests were province-wide, to prevent the breaking up of the province under the pressures of daerahism in its three residencies.

Faced with this challenge from Simbolon, the Cabinet acted with unexampled speed. Later in the same day, it announced that Simbolon was suspended from office and that Gintings was to take his place. It added that if Gintings was unable to assume power, Makmour should do so. In order to separate Simbolon as much as possible from the Banteng Council and the Atjehnese, it also announced that the First and Fourth Regiments were temporarily placed under the direct authority of the Army Chief of Staff. This policy was based on a shrewd understanding of the situation in Medan. Knowing that Gintings, as a Karo, could serve as a focus for groups inside and outside the army in North Sumatra who resented Toba influence, it sought to support any move they might be inclined to make against Simbolon by passing the symbols of legitimacy immediately to Gintings. The Cabinet's second string, appointing Makmour if Gintings should be unable to act, was even shrewder. There is no reason to believe that it wanted to see Makmour crowned panglima in Medan; its intention in mentioning him was presumably to use him as a stick to beat Gintings into action. This is just what happened. Gintings, as it turned out, did need prodding; Makmour, an active and unusually outspoken opponent of Simbolon, was an excellent candidate to do it. Gintings and Makmour came into fierce conflict later, as we shall see, over Makmour's organizing and arming of a Communist-influenced village guard in East Sumatra, and over the East Sumatra autonomy movement. If we may read this future conflict back into their positions and views of each other on December 22nd, it is not hard to see that the prospect of Makmour as panglima would have given Gintings and the groups behind him a powerful stimulus to action.²⁰

Calculations of this sort account for the Cabinet's swift--swift doubtless because it must have known for some time that something like this was possible--and strong action against Simbolon. This action contrasts sharply with its treatment of the Banteng Council, announced the day before, which consisted of little more than sending an investigating committee to Padang--a committee, moreover, headed by Col. Dahlan Djambek, a Minangkabau and an officer so sympathetic to the Banteng Council that before eight months were up he had gone to join it. Though Simbolon's posture ("Revolutionary Command") was less diplomatic than Husein's, their acts amounted essentially to the same thing.

20. See Feith, Decline, pp. 528-529, and the original version of this paper, p. 9, for more confident analyses of the Gintings-Makmour situation at this time, both placing more emphasis on Makmour's PKI affinities. The problem is that there is very little information on the Makmour of before December 22nd and no certainty about Makmour's reasons for the political line he followed in 1957.

What was different in the two cases was simply that Husein's troops and his area offered no openings for Djakarta-encouraged subversion, while Simbolon was sitting on ten pins, any one of which might be knocked out from under him.

The force of this reasoning was apparent to Simbolon. It was obviously necessary to give a high post, such as the one he gave, to Gintings. He did this before the Cabinet announcement; it was necessary for purely local reasons, regardless of what the Cabinet did. Moreover, his two radio statements directed to Sukarno, on December 24th and 25th, though they involved no real change in his position, did make a special point of his loyalty to the Republic and to Sukarno himself (a point not appearing in his original announcement) and were more lavish in their reference to the Independence Proclamation, etc. They give the impression that he was going out of his way to emphasize his loyalty in order to prevent his opponents from using the charge of separatism against him.²¹

But all this--his appeal to anti-Djakarta sentiment, his attempt to placate and neutralize Gintings with high office, the new barracks built with the millions of rupiahs from Teluk Nibung, his long service as bapak of the Bukit Barisan Division, the inertia factor in obeying a command from a military superior, the smashed glasses--was of no use against the divisive forces of North Sumatran society once they were given an open political situation to work in. The ponderous frame of the Gadjah Command was pulled down in five days.

There is not very much information as to where Djamin Gintings stood in those five days but all that there is shows him definitely going along with Simbolon. Makmour is reported to have visited him in Medan on December 23rd to ask him to follow the Cabinet's order to take over command of TT-I, but he refused to do so.²² According to one hostile and highly circumstantial report, Gintings played an openly pro-Simbolon role on the morning of the 25th, heading a Gadjah Command delegation to a parley with the militant Second Regiment officer groups (see below) and again refusing to obey the Cabinet's order. The same source mentions a Gadjah Command order signed by Gintings on the evening of the 26th instructing the leaders of the Second Regiment officer group to report to Medan the next morning (presumably for disciplining)--this at a time when these officers were already on the move in the counter-coup which was to install Gintings as panglima within a few hours.²³ This last item fits

21. Kempen, Kedjadian2 di Sumatera, pp. 62-65, gives the texts of these two radio addresses.

22. Waspada, February 8, 1957. This is also mentioned briefly by Prime Minister Ali (PIA, January 22(M), 1957).

23. Waspada, February 8, 1957.

with what is the most striking feature of Gintings' behavior in these days; there is no evidence, even from his partisans, to suggest that he played any part in the counter-coup which brought him to power. All this is not to throw doubt on the idea that Gintings and Simbolon at bottom stood for two quite opposed groups. It does suggest, however, the many factors--personal loyalty, prudence in an awkward position, lack of aggressiveness, a policy of cooperating with Simbolon until greater independence from Djakarta had been achieved, genuine reluctance to unleash civil strife within East Sumatra, a greater fear of Makmour than of Simbolon--which might have led him to play a retiring role.

But if Gintings did not act others were ready to do so in his stead. The first move came from the kabupaten town of Pematang Siantar in the plantation area of Simelungun, which was the headquarters of the Second Regiment. Here, on the evening of December 24th, a group of 27 captains and lieutenants met under the leadership of Captain Langlang Buwana and signed a "Joint Resolution" condemning Simbolon's coup. Ominously taking note of the fact that the Government's order had not yet been carried out, but instead a Gadjah Command had been set up, they called once more on Gintings to act. If he was "not prepared or unable" to do so, they called on Makmour; if Makmour in turn did not want to, "we are united in our determination to carry it out."²⁴

The group--on which more later--wasted no time in making known its hostility to the coup. According to one story, two majors, non-signers, were pressed into service to carry the resolution to TT-I headquarters. They arrived in Medan in the middle of the night, found a Gadjah Command meeting in session and handed over the resolution at 3:30 a.m. The Gadjah Command must have taken this new development seriously, because within seven hours (by 11:00 a.m. on December 25th) a Gadjah Command delegation, consisting of Gintings, Munthe and Major Nelang Sembiring, arrived in Pematang Siantar to talk to the twenty-seven. It was an interesting trio to be representing Simbolon's cause, since Munthe and Sembiring were both close associates of Gintings and both, like him, were Karo; there were thus no true Simbolon supporters along. Nevertheless, if we can rely on our source here, the delegation did represent Simbolon, holding to his position during what must have been a rather searching confrontation with six representatives of the twenty-seven.

At 5:00 p.m., minds not having met, the Gintings delegation left and the six representatives went to see Makmour, to remind him that the Cabinet had instructed him to act against Simbolon

24. See Waspada, January 1, 1957, for text and list of signers, all but a few of whom were from the Second Regiment.

if Gintings was unwilling to do so (as indeed Gintings had just shown himself) and also to repeat that they were going to act if Makmour would not.²⁵ This may have been a genuine case of militant subordinates prodding a reluctant superior into action, something which has happened often enough in the history of the Indonesian army. On the other hand the general tenor of Makmour's opinions and behavior in the following nine months,²⁶ and his close association with several of the officers concerned, make it possible that he and the others had planned the thing to build up in this way, from background noise by the officer group to his open decision the next day. The evidence is inadequate, but the most plausible interpretation, I would say, is one between these extremes: close agreement on the issues between Makmour and the others, but the initiative and some pressure coming from below.²⁷

Makmour, at any rate, did come quickly into action. At 1:00 p.m. on December 26th he announced that he had taken over command of TT-I. He based this action not only on the prior instructions from Djakarta but also on the argument that Simbolon had violated the December 4th Idea. Interestingly, he also set himself squarely against Gintings by stating that he was acting because Gintings "did not want" to carry out the Cabinet order.²⁸ It was only a matter of phrasing--Makmour had to show Gintings'

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25. Waspada, February 8, 9, 1957. The source of this highly circumstantial information is not stated but is evidently from within the twenty-seven officer group, or at least sympathetic to it.
 26. As I have already remarked, there is very little on Makmour from before December 22nd. Waspada, February 8, 1957, however, has him going to Medan on December 23rd to urge Gintings to take command, to urge Simbolon to abandon his enterprise and finally to tell Munthe that Gintings should make his position clear by December 26th. "Or else" is implied in this last, and if the report is accurate, Makmour was ready for action from almost the beginning.
 27. Another factor which may have influenced Makmour, and must have strongly influenced others, was Sukarno's Order of the Day on December 25th, which publicly backed up the Cabinet position. (The text can be found in PIA, January 22 (M), 1957.) The Cabinet was a declining institution of the old regime and men may well have waited for stronger authority on which to act. Though not at all specific in content it is mentioned more often than the Cabinet decree of December 22nd as the basis for men's actions in reports during the following few weeks.
 28. Text in Kempen, Kedjadian2 di Sumatera, pp. 70-71.

inaction to justify his own action, though he need not have put it so bluntly--but it established at the very beginning an air of hostility between himself and Gintings.

After four long days of political maneuver and calculation Makmour's public assumption of command brought resolution in swift action. Perhaps other anti-Simbolon factions had been planning to act and no doubt the public and well-documented events in Pematang Siantar since December 24th overshadow private and unreported doings in other corners. But on the published evidence, and indeed in the rhythm of events as they did occur, it was Makmour's action which precipitated the showdown. One panglima might defy Djakarta for months or years--some did--but there could not long be two panglimas in one area. There might be fighting, Makmour or Simbolon might be ousted, those who preferred Gintings might hoist him into office provided they moved in time, but something had to happen, and quickly.

There are two published accounts of the Sapta Marga Operation, the counter-coup which overthrew Simbolon on the night of December 26th/27th.²⁹ They disagree on important points and it is best to begin by summarizing them in turn. The first comes from what are described as "authoritative military sources just returned to Djakarta from Medan."³⁰ According to this version there were two groups opposing Simbolon:

1. The Second Regiment group, led by Captain Buwana.
2. A group headed by Sugiharto, including the commander of the TT-I field artillery battalion, Captain Hanafi Sitalaksana, and the commander of the TT-I cavalry (i.e., armored) squadron, Captain Tjuk Suwondo.

The story goes on to say that the Sugiharto group contacted the Second Regiment group and they agreed to mount a joint action in Medan on December 26th. This action was led by Makmour, who "later" announced that he had taken over command of TT-I.

On the insistence of Lt. Col. Sugiharto and other officers opposed to Simbolon, Lt. Col. Djamin Gintings was then forced to issue a communique that he had carried out the orders of the Army Chief of Staff and the government by ousting Col. Simbolon as commander of the TT-I. The announcement was backed

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29. The Sapta Marga is the army loyalty oath. The Sapta Marga Operation is sometimes mixed up with the Sabang Merauke Operation, Nainggolan's raid on Medan in March 1958, because the initials and general symbolic associations are the same, and because of punning associations--"satu marga" and so forth.
 30. PIA, January 8 (M), 1957. Col. Gatot Subroto's mission had just returned from Medan and this is presumably the origin of this report.

up by military activities carried out by the troops under Lt. Col. Makmour, the KMKB Medan troops led by Lt. Col. Sugiharto and reinforced by armored cars and tanks under the command of Captain Tjuk Suwondo.

The other version appears in Ali Sastroamidjojo's report to Parliament on January 21st.³¹

On December 26th at 10:00 p.m. Lt. Col. Sugiharto, Major L. R. Munthe, Major [Ulung] Sitepu and others drew up the plan for the Sapta Marga Operation which was to be carried out on December 27th by putting in Battalion 137, Battalion 139, Cavalry Squadron V, and one company of Field Artillery [Battalion] II.³²

The objective of the Sapta Marga Operation was to disarm Col. M. Simbolon and his men, on the understanding that bloodshed had to be avoided; should this not be possible, a total assault would be launched in order that the situation might be completely controlled.

As the units of Battalion 137, coming from Brastagi, were delayed--they had to occupy the police station and the telephone exchange at Pantjar Batu first--the Sapta Marga Operation could not be launched before 4:00 a.m.

At 3:00 a.m. Col. Simbolon, because of the Sapta Marga Operation, left his house and then Medan, together with part of Batalion 132, for Prapat.

At 5:00 a.m. Major Munthe reported that the Sapta Marga Operation had completed the occupation of Medan.

At 6:00 a.m. Lt. Col. Djamin Gintings issued a statement that he had assumed authority over TT-I.

Thus it happened that there were two acting commanders in one military district.

On the face of it these reports are hard to reconcile, not only in details, which is only to be expected, but in their main thrust. Ali Sastroamidjojo pictures a single harmonious Sapta

31. PIA, January 22 (M), 1957.

32. Battalion 137 was based in Kabupaten Tanah Karo; its commander was Captain Slamet Gintings (Karo). Battalion 139 was based in Kabupaten Langkat; its commander was Captain Liano Siregar (Toba or Mandailing). Both of these were in the Second Regiment. Sitepu (Karo) was then the chief of staff of KMKB Medan.

Marga Operation capped by an uncomplicated assumption of power by Djamin Gintings. The "authoritative source" shows a difficult pas de quatre: two distinct factions (Sugiharto's and Makmour's) form a coalition, drive out Simbolon and then force a fourth person (Djamin Gintings) to assume office.

We can do little to clear up the differences of detail or to fill in gaps not covered by either source. But the disagreement over the general picture of the event can be settled fairly easily. Ali achieves his picture of harmony mainly by giving no place at all in his story of the coup itself to Makmour's Pematang Siantar group and by bringing in Makmour as rival panglima only at the very end, as an afterthought. This is consistent with Ali's treatment of the whole subject; earlier, in the same report to the DPR, he manages to quote the Cabinet order of December 22nd and describe the events between then and December 26th without once mentioning the clause about Makmour. Ali had good reason to play down Makmour's role in all this: his cabinet had created the problem of the two panglimas in the first place, and he had an incentive, particularly in a public speech, to show that everything had gone off smoothly. We can confidently accept the "authoritative source's" assertion that Makmour, Buwana and other officers from the Pematang Siantar group played an important part in the coup against Simbolon.³³

We can also accept the general picture it gives of the situation as a fine geometrical tension of factions. It is harder to identify and describe the particular factions, however, and we might try to do so now.³⁴

The only one of these factions mentioned in both versions above is the one around Sugiharto, and this is also the most homogeneous and easily defined. All three of the leading officers in this faction were ethnically non-Sumatran (Sugiharto and Suwondo were Javanese, Sitalaksana Sundanese) and seem never to have lived or served in Sumatra previously. Politically this meant that they had no obvious local constituency and were likely to look to Djakarta (specifically the army leadership under Nasution) for support, and to operate in its behalf. They were

33. For independent corroboration of this group's participation, see also Waspada, February 9, 1957, which reports the seizure of the Medan radio station by troops under Captain Rusli, the commander of Battalion 133 (which was always the closest to Makmour) and one of the six representatives who had met Gintings in Pematang Siantar on December 25th. Cf. also PIA, January 2 (M), 1957.

34. In the following I pretend an equivalence between an officer and the unit he commands, so that I will sometimes say that one of our sources mentions a particular officer, when in fact it only mentions the unit, or vice versa. This is not wholly sound but saves endless qualifications.

also all located in Medan--Sugiharto commanding the KMKB, the others commanding division-level special units--a circumstance which gave them disproportionately strong political leverage.

A second faction was the one forming around Makmour in Pematang Siantar, whose earlier activities we have been following. It is harder to characterize a large group like this, roughly defined by the twenty-seven names of those who signed the December 24th resolution, except to say that those names show that it was mainly Sumatran but thoroughly mixed in its ethnic composition, and that the resolution itself suggests a "young officer" militance. But if we stick to the six officers who represented the twenty-seven in the December 25th parley with Gintings³⁵ and the overlapping group of six officers reported to have been sought for disciplinary action by the Gadjah Command late on the 26th³⁶--along with Makmour himself--we can get a clearer picture. As a group they strike one as the type of army officer formed by the experience and ideals of the perjuangan: populist, nationalist, militant.³⁷ Outside the army this officer type found an exact equivalent in the pedjuang, and its thinking a less exact equivalent in that of the PKI (and Murba). It is worth noting, in the light of these affinities, that two of these men (Makmour at the time, Maliki later) were accused of being Communists, that Makmour made common cause with the PKI on a number of important East Sumatran issues in 1957, that several of these officers (notably Buwana) had a following among local pedjuang dating from Revolutionary days, and that Makmour's most controversial policy during 1957 was his arming of pedjuang (and Sarbupri members) in a village guard. In the political context of the time Makmour's faction was pro-Djakarta and anti-daerahist like the Sugiharto faction, but in its ideological and political style, and also in its local connections, it was very different indeed.

The other two factions--Simbolon's and Gintings'--are more obvious, but at the same time pose two special difficulties. First, they were formed around two successive panglimas of TT-I. These officers held a very important position, and it is not always easy to distinguish their supporters in a faction sense

35. Captains R. T. Gintings (Karo), Langlang Buwana, Maliki (Javanese) and Rusli (?); Lieutenants Djakat Silalahi and Pandak Tarigan (Karo).

36. The first three of the above and also Captains Turangan (Menadonese) and Zein Hamid and Lieutenant Gindo Bangko.

37. The tone of their thinking is suggested by a further statement launched by the six representatives at Djamin Gintings in the confrontation on December 25th: that the program to be followed should be one acceptable to Sukarno and one which would serve the interests of the whole Indonesian people, not just daerah interests (kepentingan daerah). Waspada, February 9, 1957.

from officers who worked closely with them simply in the course of duty, or out of a practical respect for their power. Second, these factions both had a strong suku basis. This does not mean, however, that all Toba officers ipso facto supported Simbolon or all Karo officers Gintings. More important, one must guard against the temptation to suppose that all officers of the one or the other suku who did support the panglima of the same suku were necessarily doing so for that reason.

In Simbolon's case the success of the counter-coup and his flight to Tapanuli provide plenty of evidence as to who his true supporters, mostly Toba, were: officers like Samosir and the dozen or so others, who either went to Tapanuli with him or were removed from office by Gintings immediately afterwards. No such concrete evidence of allegiance is available in Gintings' case (or the other two, for that matter), and the membership of his faction is the most difficult to specify. Of the officers active in the affairs of December we may tentatively assign Sembiring, Munthe, Ulung Sitepu and Slamet Gintings, all Karo, to a Gintings faction and leave it at that for the time being.³⁸

From this tour of the military factions of East Sumatra as they were in late December 1956, it is evident that they were only rough groupings, with membership and basic viewpoints (except where suku was concerned) only approximately definable. It is also evident that they were formed around the four officers occupying the highest positions in the area (Simbolon and Gintings in succession in the same office, of course). These two observations taken together suggest that one must visualize a general pool of crosscutting opinions and personal interests in this deeply divided area and then see factions, not as stable and clearcut institutions, but as partial and temporary alignments of these opinions and interests in a pattern determined largely by who it was who happened to occupy these powerful offices at a given moment. With this idea in mind we can return to the narrative.

Before Simbolon launched his coup on the morning of December 22nd, the situation in North Sumatra was normal. Routine prevailed, power relationships were changing, but still slowly; a soldier could go to bed at night knowing that the same commanding officer would be giving him orders the next morning. Simbolon's

38. Munthe, Sitepu and Slamet Gintings all played parts in the counter-coup, according to Ali Sastroamidjojo. Waspada, December 29, 1956 reports that Slamet Gintings' Battalion 137 took over guard duties at TT-I headquarters after the counter-coup. PIA, January 4 (M), 1957, quotes Haluan (Padang) as listing Slamet Gintings, Sitepu and Munthe as particularly active in the military politics of the period.

coup cracked this routine; by temporarily lifting the weight of central government authority off the area's back, he opened up the political situation. A severe strain was put on all existing power relationships. For a few days the inertia of his continued command of TT-I kept these more or less intact, but his power began to drain away almost from the moment he made his break. By the 26th, the situation had reached the point, so familiar in history, at which the superstructure of political life seems suddenly to dissolve, leaving society stripped down for a time to more basic relationships, while men leap almost frantically into action to build a new superstructure.

For almost a week after Makmour's announcement on the 26th, the situation in East Sumatra and Tapanuli was politically and militarily open. In describing what was going on I have had and will have to break the material into sections; it is thus almost impossible to convey the impression which the reports of the period give of the scattering of power into small units all over the map and all through a wide range of political positions, and then of the clumping together once more of these units, re-forming into larger and more coherent shapes. All around the area in that week officers were being arrested, civilians were being armed and disarmed, small units of troops marched and made announcements, committees met and candidates for power sought support. And underneath it all was the fear on all sides that the situation might slide from military politics into suku war.

When Simbolon fled Medan early in the morning of the 27th with a hundred or more men from Battalion 132, he naturally headed for Tapanuli. On his way, by Pemantang Siantar, he tried to persuade the cadets and officers of the SKI (Infantry Cadre School) there to join his cause, but he was forestalled by Makmour, and had to continue on his way to Prapat, a resort town on Lake Toba, leaving behind a spate of arrests and disarmings by Makmour. At Prapat, just inside Second Regiment territory, he was met by Major Samosir with troops from the Third Regiment.³⁹

During the next few days it seemed possible that there might be fighting between the Second and Third Regiments. Samosir was encroaching on Second Regiment soil at Prapat and Makmour threatened to attack if he did not leave. Both gave out arms to a few hundred civilian supporters and may have fostered the rumors current at the time that thousands more had been armed. AURI planes, freshly sent up to Medan, buzzed Tapanuli as a warning. But both sides played the game of military politics quite properly according to the established rules of that day, and the only thing which might have passed for real trouble was what

39. For a report on Simbolon's efforts with the SKI and Makmour's countermeasures, see Waspada, December 31, 1956. For a nice vignette see Waspada, January 1, 1957.

Samosir later reported as one incident "short of a clash." And soon Simbolon and Samosir--who had no reason to remain forever in Prapat, provoking Makmour, once hope of a comeback coup had faded--retreated by slow stages across the border and deeper into Tapanuli.⁴⁰ For Nasution on January 2nd to order the Second and Third Regiments to keep the peace along the border was quite unnecessary; by that time the danger of fighting had passed, the situation had hardened again and politics could move back up to a higher level.

It was also useless for Gintings on December 29th to offer a 7-day period of grace for all men who had left their posts to return, before being stamped as deserters. Men loyal to Simbolon, mostly Toba in this case, who could retreat to the newly-forming independent area of Tapanuli, had no reason to return. Indeed on Gintings' part, the offer was presumably mostly a matter of form; at heart, as the agent of anti-Toba forces in East Sumatra, he could not have felt much pain at seeing Toba returning to Tapanuli. When on January 3rd he ordered Samosir to report to Medan, he also presumably had little expectation of being obeyed.

Meanwhile, the situation in Tapanuli, only indirectly disturbed by what was going on in East Sumatra, was taking a new shape. On December 31st, Samosir, who now had Simbolon alongside him, announced that he was putting the Third Regiment directly under Chief of Staff Nasution and that he no longer considered himself to be responsible to the commander of TT-I. A few days later, Dr. F. L. Tobing emerged from retirement to head the list of signers of a telegram to Sukarno and Gintings explaining that Samosir could not obey Gintings' summons to Medan because of the uneasy situation in Tapanuli. Tobing, the most prestigious Toba Revolutionary leader, symbolized a strong and united Tapanuli; when he came into action again, people inside and outside the residency knew that the relations between Tapanuli and the central government had changed. A few days later he headed a delegation to Djakarta to talk to Nasution and others, and on February 12th he became the head of the newly set up "Tapanuli August 17th Proclamation Council."

Tapanuli, in fact, was beginning to go the way of the other daerah and, like Husein's Fourth Regiment area before it, more or less disappeared as a factor on the East Sumatra military scene. On February 12th it got its Revolutionary Youth Command, late in October its Tapanuli Reconstruction Movement. There were occasional signs during the year of friction across the old cleavage line, Christian North vs. Moslem South, but the published

40. Some of the details are in Waspada, January 3, 1957, and PIA, January 14 (M, A), 1957. The whole question of the arming of the civilians is discussed later.

references at least make it sound less serious than one would suspect from a knowledge of the history of the Revolution in Tapanuli. Publicly anyway, Tapanuli faced outward as a united front and it got the same soft treatment the government had accorded the Banteng Council's united West Sumatra earlier. It appears to have been given important financial and other advantages;⁴¹ when Nasution, after ten months of delicate maneuvers, succeeded in replacing Samosir, the new commander of the Third Regiment proved to be a Toba Batak and already a member of the Tapanuli Reconstruction Movement.⁴²

Simbolon's flight to Tapanuli and the danger of fighting between the Second and Third Regiments represented tension along one axis of the faction pattern, the Simbolon-Makmour one. During these same days Makmour and Gintings were also involved in a tense situation rising out of the fact that each had proclaimed himself panglima. The very fact that the week between the appearance of this interesting problem and its solution on January 3rd was garnished with statements by all concerned that no problem existed is the best evidence to the contrary.

Makmour made it plain that he would not easily and automatically give up the strong position which he had obtained by announcing his assumption of command, in perfect accord with the Cabinet order of December 22nd, some eighteen hours before Gintings had. For a few days it seemed possible that he might try to maintain his claim on the office. At the same time he kept up the appearance of perfect compliance. On the 28th he distributed a leaflet in Medan in which he disclaimed any ambition to be panglima, demanding only a clarification of the situation. Not that the matter was very difficult, he indicated, in fact it could be solved easily: it was all in the hands of the central government authorities--a posture which, given the situation, suggested that he would not yield easily.⁴³ In an interview on December 31st he repeated his argument, denying any friction with Gintings or that he wanted the post, but saying that "the central government should be clear about this matter and must establish whether the assumption of command which was proclaimed in Siantar is admitted or not, because I too have carried

41. Thus, for one example, Sibolga was declared an ocean port (i.e., elevated from the status of coastal trade port) on October 26th. Waspada, November 1, 1957.

42. He was Major Sahala Hutabarat. Nasution had used him as his intermediary in much of his negotiations with Samosir and Simbolon. The parallel here with Dahlan Djambek is striking and suggests a good deal about the Indonesian style of negotiations.

43. Waspada, January 2, 1957.

out the government policy [of December 22nd]."⁴⁴

In a context in which Gintings' position was compromised by his partial or seeming collaboration with Simbolon and by the fact that he had been rescued mainly if not entirely by others, this was an ominous line. The Government statement broadcast the next day, January 1st, though it said clearly that Makmour must yield place to Gintings, 'showed signs of weakness by the praise it lavished on him and particularly by the fact that it declared that all his acts while he was self-proclaimed panglima were legal.'⁴⁵ Whatever the practical significance of this--as regards his arming of civilians, for example--the atmosphere of the transaction showed plainly that Makmour was a power to be reckoned with henceforth in East Sumatra.

Satisfied by this concession, and perhaps by others unrevealed, Makmour went through a ceremony on January 3rd in which he handed over authority over TT-I to Gintings. Presumably he had not really expected to be able to hold onto the office, but he had certainly used his claim shrewdly to enhance his prestige.

A third axis in the faction pattern, Gintings-Simbolon, was also a source of tension in this period, and here the issue can be brought down clearly to a base in suku antagonisms. Where Makmour was involved, the issues were personal hostility (in the case of Simbolon), rivalry for command of TT-I and potential socio-economic conflict (in the case of Gintings), and in both cases, above all, national unity versus daerahism (to be sure, resting in part on Toba and Karo sukuism respectively). But the friction between Simbolon and Gintings was quite simply the friction between Toba and Karo, and it was on this axis of faction conflict that men felt the danger of suku fighting. The week at the turn of the new year saw a sudden growth of peace committees of elders, formed to calm down the passions of the young; the alim ulama of Medan, Governor Pontas, and Regent Salamuddin of Simalungun all formed such committees in this period, in the teeth of the official line, subscribed to by all concerned, that there were no signs of suku tensions. Perhaps the line was substantially right, after all, and perhaps Pontas was exaggerating when he said later that there had been widespread fear in Medan on the 27th and that many people had fled the town that day lest they be caught in a clash between Gintings and Simbolon. But the open situation left scope for latent antagonism to find its way to the surface; the emotions, for example, which led 200 Christian Batak students at the Police Training School in Tandjung Kasau to evacuate their barracks on the 29th and

⁴⁴. Waspada, January 1, 1957.

⁴⁵. Waspada, January 3, 1957, and PIA, January 2 (M), 3 (A), 1957, give most of the details of the various announcements from Djakarta.

disappear to Tapanuli cannot be underestimated.⁴⁶

Nevertheless it is important to assess the intentions of the higher level participants in these struggles. There is no evidence that any of them wanted to fight. If we are to believe all the reports, Toba civilians, Communist plantation workers, Karo pedjuang, and citizens of Medan were all armed by their military representatives, and troops were marshalled and marched here and there. But all this was done in the interest of political maneuver and by the rules of the game--everyone wanted a bloodless victory.⁴⁷ Fighting might have begun by accident, and if it had, the situation might have exploded, as at Madiun in 1948. But fighting was no part of the conscious intentions of the leaders, and their intentions were borne out by a rich harvest of political change, but no bloodshed.

After January 3rd, routine of a kind was restored, though it never regained the fixity which it had had before Simbolon's coup. Considering how little time had passed and the fact that there had been no violence, it is perhaps surprising how great a change there was in the distribution of power in TT-I. The Fourth Regiment of Central Sumatra had passed completely out of its old orbit. Major Gaharu had taken advantage of the Government's difficulty with Simbolon to pull the First Regiment and Atjeh off into partial independence. On December 31st he followed up the precedent created by the Cabinet decree of December 22nd placing the First Regiment directly under the Army Chief of Staff--but only temporarily--by declaring that the First Regiment would no longer recognize the authority of TT-I.⁴⁸ A week later he announced that the First Regiment had been transformed into the KDM Atjeh (Komando Daerah Militer Atjeh--thus an autonomous entity); in mid-January he publicly discarded the TT-I lentjana

46. For the police students, see Waspada, January 2, 1957. Mimbar Umum (Medan weekly), December 30, 1956, gives the text of a leaflet dropped by Gintings over Pematang Siantar and Prapat during Simbolon's retreat towards Tapanuli. It is considerably less restrained than the various statements (intended for a wider public, including Djakarta) made by Gintings in Medan around this time, and hints at the likelihood of reprisals if Simbolon should try to recapture control of East Sumatra. A later news story (PIA, January 11 (A), 1957), which says that "certain military agencies" had distributed arms to civilians "shortly after" (my emphasis) December 27th, helps to underline the fact that the successful coup against Simbolon marked the beginning rather than the end of the danger of suku (and other) fighting.

47. PIA, January 11 (A), 1957, carried some shrewd remarks by Het Vrije Volk on this point.

48. PIA, January 1 (M), 1957 (Radio Kutaradja).

(emblem) and announced a new one for the KDM Atjeh.⁴⁹ Gintings fought back on behalf of TT-I and for a few weeks there was a running technical quarrel about whether or not Atjeh was tactically under the Army Chief of Staff, but organically and administratively under TT-I and things like that. But in the existing situation Gaharu's initiative was irresistible; at the all-Sumatra Army conference in Palembang in late January he was recognized as what he claimed to be, commander of an autonomous KDM Atjeh, and he was formally installed as such on March 30th.⁵⁰

Meanwhile, Gaharu used his newly strong position and his doubly legitimate authority as both an Atjehnese and the local Army commander to improve the situation inside Atjeh. He operated throughout in the "legitimate" style, and his accomplishments have attracted less attention than the more dramatic and defiant doings of some of his counterparts in this period. Briefly, he achieved four main things for Atjeh during 1957. First, he compelled Djakarta to arrange for the return of at least one of the two battalions of Atjehnese troops serving outside Atjeh (Battalion 706 from Sulawesi), with the consequent removal of some of the non-Atjehnese units previously serving there. Second, he played a large part in arranging for Atjeh to be promoted from a residency inside the province of North Sumatra to a province in its own right, with a Governor (an Atjehnese, Ali Hasjmy) of its own. Third, he extracted economic concessions from Djakarta, such as the application of the 70:30 foreign exchange formula to Atjeh. Finally, and perhaps most important, he used all these and the prestige and funds accruing to him from them to engineer a ceasefire in the Daud Beureueh rebellion in June 1957.⁵¹

The position of Tapanuli, too, had changed drastically, but along somewhat different lines. In many ways it was going the way of Central Sumatra and Atjeh; it had its own loyal military force, the Third Regiment, and we have already seen how it developed a form of daerah movement during 1957. But there was this difference: the Third Regiment did not achieve formal separation from

49. On KDM Atjeh see PIA, January 8 (A), 1957, and Harian Rakjat, January 8, 1957 (Radio Kutaradja, January 7) with the TT-I response. On the lentjana, see Waspada, January 29, 1957.

50. The Palembang conference (January 29-31) is covered in Waspada, February 7, 1957, among others. For Gaharu's installation see PIA, April 1 (M), 1957, which also reports the same for Husein as commander of the new KDM Sumatra Tengah.

51. For an example of how this sort of thing was handled, see Waspada, March 9, 1957, citing Pedoman, March 7, 1957, stating that Gaharu had set up a Council to carry on barter trade from Atjeh. The proceeds, says the story, were to go to the Dana Pembangunan (Construction Fund) in Atjeh to finance the penampungan (job resettlement) of pedjuang and to buy off Daud Beureueh.

TT-I and remained throughout under the nominal command of Medan.⁵² In practical terms this made little difference, since Samosir (with Simbolon behind him) was hardly amenable to orders from Gintings, and one might be tempted to think that it was a question of form alone. But underlying the nominal connection was the real sociological one, the vested interest in East Sumatra represented by the half million Toba and substantial numbers of Mandailing living there. Whatever the accidents of circumstances and personalities which prevented the emergence of a KDM Tapanuli--the record is not clear on this point--the fact remained that Tapanuli could never retire into the pure daerahism of Minangkabau or Atjeh.

This complicating factor, cogent as it was, nevertheless manifested itself in the ensuing months chiefly in the field of civilian politics--the autonomy movement to be discussed below--rather than directly in military politics. After January 3rd the Third Regiment as such was as remote from Medan and the TT-I command as were the Fourth and First Regiments. All that was left of the old TT-I, then, was the units actually stationed in the residency of East Sumatra: the Second Regiment, the KMKB Medan and a few special units. Here the kind of solution which Husein and Gaharu had reached in their areas and which Samosir had approximated in his was impossible. Their areas were ethnically, religiously and economically more or less homogeneous and hence, for them, daerah feeling was a valid organizing principle. In East Sumatra, on the other hand, this kind of sentiment was not a unifying, but a disruptive force. And so military politics in East Sumatra, under an inevitably less well entrenched military leadership and in a time of national crisis, remained tense.

In the new balance of power which emerged inside East Sumatra after Simbolon had been pushed out to Tapanuli and Makmour had dropped his claim to be panglima, we can see a nice balance of the three factions. Gintings held nominal power with the advantage which formal position carries, and he had many supporters among the officers of TT-I and, outside the army, among anti-Toba and pro-autonomy groups. But he did not have the kind of authority a panglima might normally expect, even within East Sumatra, all that was left of the old TT-I. Military action by Makmour and Sugiharto had played a decisive role--while he laid low--in toppling Simbolon, and political action by Djakarta had ensured that he, not Makmour, would be panglima. The Second Regiment and KMKB Medan, the only two major units under his command, were very largely controlled by Makmour and Sugiharto. All this was reflected in the formal aspect of his position and in other matters in which higher authorities were

52. It was the same in the world of civil administration. Tapanuli remained a residency in the province of North Sumatra.

involved. For one thing he was for the time being only a pedjabat (acting) panglima, a designation which in the Indonesian military and civil hierarchies has always meant either that the appointing authorities have some reservations about a man⁵³ or that they are waiting to see whether he will prove himself, but which in any case implies lesser authority. Moreover, his formal installation as pedjabat panglima was delayed by protracted negotiations until March 25th. From January he had a non-TT-I officer, Lt. Col. Hasan Kasim--in effect a representative of Nasution--as his chief of staff, and this arrangement was continued after his formal installation in office, though Kasim was later transferred to South Sumatra for similar duties. Finally, the Palembang conference created a special new committee, the Staf Penghubung (Liaison Staff) to preside over the disintegration of the old TT-I. The Staf Penghubung, which met in Medan, consisted of the commanders of the four former regiments of TT-I (two of them being detached to become KDM) and of KMKB Medan, and had as its (rotating) chairman not Gintings, but one of the Army Deputy Chiefs of Staff. In this way direct communication between Army Headquarters and the sub-TT-I commanders was maintained.⁵⁴ One might think, surveying all these derogations of Gintings' authority, that he had nothing left. It would be more accurate to say that taken, all together, they had the effect of reducing him to something very much like equality with his rivals, who were occupying what were normally much less important positions.

The place of Makmour and Sugiharto in the triangle requires less comment. Makmour had a strong base in Pematang Siantar, associations with pedjuang and Sarbupri which he was to develop further in the coming months, strong support in Battalion 133 in Tebing Tinggi, rather less influence to the north and among the other battalions of the regiment. Sugiharto had risen rapidly in importance during the events of late December and probably had a stronger position in his own area, Medan, than either of the other two did in theirs. It is noticeable that he played no open part in the factional disputes immediately after the counter-coup, but he had a major role ahead of him in the events of the year to come.

Besides the three main factions there are two other factors we must keep in mind. In the first place we cannot ignore the existence of Toba and supporters of Simbolon within the army in East Sumatra, nor the fact that the Toba element did not evaporate

53. In this connection one should keep in mind that the original idea, before December 22nd even, appears to have been for Gintings to be only a caretaker panglima, while the search for a permanent replacement for Simbolon continued.

54. For some of the details of this arrangement see Waspada, February 4, 7 and March 1, 1957; PIA, February 9, 1957 (press summary).

from East Sumatran society simply because Simbolon had been ousted. Toba officers, like Captain Henry Siregar (commander of Battalion 131 in Medan), remained in high positions in the army, and we will see some indications of their re-emergence in October. In the second place, it is evident that the even balance of factions in East Sumatra, as the situation began to stabilize after Simbolon's ouster, made it easier for Army Headquarters, and Nasution in particular, to exert an unusually great degree of influence. The evidence is there in the preceding descriptions, and we shall see as we go through 1957 how strong that influence was on this divided scene.

The period between January and mid-year 1957 has few highlights in East Sumatran affairs. Instead of "events," it is marked by long-drawn-out struggles over certain issues. These I will take up in turn, though, in fact, they developed simultaneously.

On the level of national politics, there was an interminable series of more or less private negotiations between Nasution (or his representatives) and local commanders. At the same time, there was a succession of well-publicized military conferences concerned with the reorganization of the army and all the various problems involved in military administration under the state of war and siege introduced on March 14th. In the one case, Nasution was working to strengthen his own position in the army; in the other, he and the delegates to the conferences were together trying to work out the forms and procedures by which military administration could be carried out effectively and the army, as an entity, consolidate its power. These were interesting and important developments, but it is difficult to follow their operation in East Sumatra. In the relatively simple situation that prevailed in Tapanuli, for example, we can watch Nasution, like a mouse under a rug, moving slowly toward his goal of replacing Samosir with a man somewhat more amenable to his control. In the jumble of East Sumatra, however, Nasution's political maneuverings are almost impossible to follow. Likewise, we can follow economic policy and the operation of military administration in Atjeh or Central Sumatra because daerahism provides a framework in which to see it. In East Sumatra, the perpetual dance of military factions in the foreground obscures these other less spectacular developments. Moreover, the very fact that East Sumatra, unlike the other areas of the old TT-I, was still divided within itself appears to have resulted in its being unable to extract major economic concessions from the central government.⁵⁵ It likewise meant

55. As far as I know, East Sumatra was the only area in Sumatra which was not carrying on some barter trade, either officially or with official connivance, by mid-1957.

that much less power was concentrated in the hands of the Military Administrator (under martial law), so that what was elsewhere a significant development in political organization was in East Sumatra a rather stunted growth. Thus there is simply less to report on this level.

Down inside the cockpit of East Sumatra, however, the tensions intrinsic to the area began to work themselves out in the new political situation created by the coup and the counter-coup of December 1956. Before turning to the two central issues in which the main military factions became embroiled, we should look at one perennial East Sumatran dispute which bubbled furiously during 1957 without apparently involving these military factions themselves. This was the squatter question, a massive tangle in which resentful foreign plantation interests, a central government eager for foreign exchange but acutely sensitive to charges of betraying Revolutionary ideals, and different groups of squatters--Toba and non-Toba, unorganized and organized in rival peasant unions--fought each other passionately but inconclusively. The issue was, if anything, sharpened in 1957, as Indonesia's deepening economic difficulties persuaded Djakarta to try a tougher anti-squatter policy, embodied in the Emergency Law of October 1956, and as the SOB (martial law) decree of March 1957 gave the military new powers to enforce it or new responsibility for not doing so. The consequence, in East Sumatra, was simply a more unpleasant continuation of the existing impasse: an unbroken invasion by new squatters and a wave of warnings, arrests and expulsions by the military authorities, stronger than usual but still short of an all-out drive. But in all this--the newspapers in the middle months of 1957 are full of stories about squatting incidents--there is no evidence that Gintings, Makmour and Sugiharto had different policies on the squatting question or quarrelled over it.

Two major issues, however, did cause mounting tension between these factions during the first half of 1957. One of these was the establishment and arming of an OPD (Organisasi Pengawal Desa) in the Second Regiment area. The problem was partly a simple matter of military strength, since the OPD was a large auxiliary formation and had access to weapons; behind this, however, lay a number of deep-rooted social conflicts--urgent claims of former pedjuang; disputes over how to deal with the problems created by gerombolan (armed gangs, in which there were often many former pedjuang); and the political and economic goals of Sarbupri, many of whose members were in the OPD.

The history of the OPD in East Sumatra goes back to the week or two following Simbolon's coup on December 22, 1956. At that time, during the military maneuvers which accompanied the fall of Simbolon and the establishment of a new balance of power in the area, all parties to the struggle seem to have distributed arms to supporters outside the regular military units. This much

is clear enough, but beyond this the facts are obscured by the vigorous controversy which surrounded the issue and provided most of the available published evidence. It is certain, however, that, despite their various denials, Makmour, Samosir and Sugiharto, or their supporters, did distribute weapons and that others probably did so as well.⁵⁶ Despite rumors that as many as 5,000 men were so armed in Tapanuli and 2,000 in the Simelungun area (by Makmour), it seems likely that the numbers actually given weapons at this time were considerably smaller, nearer the one hundred in East Sumatra mentioned by Munthe and Zein Hamid or the one hundred and fifty which the hostile Medan newspaper *Lembaga* claimed had been armed by Makmour.⁵⁷ The larger figures, if they are more than just fearful rumors at a time when fighting seemed possible or large numbers put about to overawe opponents, may represent guesses at the numbers of men who volunteered or who were assured they would be called upon if necessary.⁵⁸ As to who precisely the men armed were, it seems probable, despite many reports that they were simply "civilians," that most were former pedjuang.⁵⁹ Finally--a point of special importance in view of the later controversy over the OPD--it seems

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56. A Haluan (Padang) story, rendered in PIA, January 4 (M), 1957, claims that different groups, respectively those of Djamin Gintings and Slamet Gintings (with Ulung Sitepu), had armed former pedjuang supporters, and that Munthe had recruited members of the old Barisan Pengawal of the Negara Sumatera Timur.
57. The large figures are from Waspada, January 3, 1957. The Munthe and Hamid claim is in Harian Rakjat, January 5, 1957, and PIA, January 14 (A), 1957. It is not clear whether they mean in all of East Sumatra, just in the Simelungun area, or even in all of TT-I. The Lembaga figure is reported in Harian Rakjat, January 4, 1957.
58. Several sources make this distinction between those actually armed and those who volunteered spontaneously: see Munthe and Hamid, as cited in n. 57; the press officer of TT-I in Harian Rakjat, January 7, 1957 and PIA, January 7 (M), 1957; and a spokesman for the Second Regiment in Waspada, January 4, 1957.
59. For specific mention of former pedjuang see Harian Rakjat, January 7, 1957, and Waspada, January 4, 1957. For mention of former members of the army see Waspada, January 19, 1957, PIA, January 22 (M), 1957, Harian Rakjat, January 15, 1957, and Bintang Timur, January 25, 1957. See also Ali Sastroamidjojo in his replies to questions in the first term general DPR debates on the Sumatra question, February 4th, and the second term ones, February 13th, Kempen, Djawaban Pemerintah atas Pemandangan Umum, Babak ke-I DPR ... mengenai keterangan Pemerintah tentang kejadian2 di Sumatera bulan Desember 1956,

clear that a substantial proportion of those armed or volunteering to be armed by Makmour in Simelungun were Sarbupri members as well as being former pedjuang and/or men on reserve lists.⁶⁰

These vexing questions of fact may partly obscure the underlying importance of what was really happening: a quick and general intimation of danger which led large numbers of men to volunteer to fight and induced various army officers in the area to arm many of them in a very short space of time. Still, were it not for the later history of the OPD, we could tuck this away as just a revealing insight into the psychological pressures felt in the fluid situation created by Simbolon's coup. Indeed, official voices in mid-January were saying something very much like that. On January 10th, Sugiharto ordered civilians to return the arms they had received by January 24th. On January 18th, Gintings, admitting that arms had been distributed to civilians in Siantar, assured a press conference that the matter was now settled. On January 21st, Ali Sastroamidjojo told the DPR that Nasution had ordered the return of these weapons and that this order was "now being carried out."⁶¹

January 21st, however, was also the day on which Makmour issued a decree establishing an OPD in the Second Regiment area, that is, the Residency of East Sumatra.⁶² He could probably not have done this entirely on his own authority, and indeed, later, after the formal public establishment of the OPD, TT-I headquarters stated that Gintings had issued instructions for the formation of OPD's by all regimental commanders in TT-I.⁶³

p. 48 and Babak ke-II, p. 11. In several of these sources the former soldiers are said to be classified as having B III status--in effect a kind of reserve formation or list.

60. Claimed by Lembaga (see Harian Rakjat, January 4, 1957); denied by the press officer of TT-I (PIA, January 7 (M), 1957, and again Bintang Timur, January 25, 1957); see also the conflicting versions of a statement by Sugiharto in Waspada, January 3, 1957, and Harian Rakjat, January 4, 1957; the denial by a spokesman for the Second Regiment that they were armed because they were Sarbupri (i.e., the implicit admission that that is what they were) in Waspada, January 4, 1957. I have substantially revised my original views on this question as a result of suggestions from Ruth McVey.

61. See, respectively, PIA, January 11 (A), 1957; Waspada, January 19, 1957, and PIA, January 22 (M), 1957.

62. These instructions were for internal purposes (their date comes from Waspada, March 13, 1957). The first public announcement of the OPD was on February 3rd (Waspada, February 4, 1957).

63. Waspada, February 15, 1957. No date is mentioned for these instructions by Gintings. Presumably he issued them before

But the public history of the OPD was all Makmour and no Gintings; we are justified in assuming that whatever formal authorization Gintings may have given, enthusiastically or not, the initiative had from the beginning come from Makmour. Makmour certainly had stronger reasons than Gintings for wanting an OPD. Most obviously, an organization like this, under his command, with thousands of members spread throughout East Sumatra, could not but enhance his prestige and power. The OPD members were auxiliaries with limited access to arms and little training, but they certainly had some military potential. Command over them gave him considerable patronage, if only through appointment. Running the OPD gave him a channel for politically useful contacts with Sarbupri and former pedjuang leaders. Finally, it gave him much publicity in an attractive role.⁶⁴

A second set of reasons is less easy to demonstrate but may have been even more important. On the basis of his record as we know it, from November 1956, his style was definitely that of an "ideological" rather than a "professional" army officer, the kind who considered his proper role to be out in the larger society organizing anti-gambling drives, tearing down squatters' shacks to clean up Siantar, and leading a mass organization like the OPD rather than back on the base making up training schedules.⁶⁵ Makmour must, moreover, have been reinforced in this conception of his role, and specifically in organizing the OPD, by similar attitudes among his officer supporters in Siantar. Indeed, if it is true, as I have suggested, that these subordinates exerted pressure on him to declare himself panglima on December 26th, it is likely that they would have been urging him to establish an OPD.

There are two more factors to consider. One is the question of timing. Makmour had stepped forward in a heroic role on December 26th, had elicited a warm response among the volunteers and had armed substantial numbers of them. He had a strong incentive to maintain this momentum, to hold onto his new followers

January 21st, but conceivably this story is an effort to cover up a fait accompli by Makmour.

64. Individual members of the OPD were not paid but might be given surplus uniforms and were, in any case, being rewarded with local prestige and some local authority. Civilian leaders and recruiters shared patronage power and doubtless got other perquisites. For an idea of how Makmour could use the OPD to build local support among former pedjuang, see the report of his speech at the installation of the Langkat OPD on February 17th (Waspada, February 20, 1957).

65. I am indebted to Ruth McVey for suggesting Makmour's style as an important factor here.

and build on this promising base. Yet the official line was now that things had quieted down and it was time to recover arms given to civilians.⁶⁶ The OPD offered an ideal formula for a quick change from an ad hoc action against Simbolon to a stable mass base, and a way to maintain the political initiative. The extreme rapidity of Makmour's move to establish the OPD--his order went out only three weeks after the events of late December--and its contrast with the "official" mood of back-to-normalcy--make it difficult not to see the OPD as a natural continuation of the earlier armings.⁶⁷

Finally, among Makmour's reasons for setting up the OPD, there was one with which no one could quarrel. There had been some increase in the activities of gerombolan in East Sumatra in the preceding year, and the events of December had had an unsettling effect on rural areas, manifested in a serious worsening of security in some places.⁶⁸ The OPD was designed for this purpose; similar groups were being established elsewhere in Indonesia at this time for comparable purposes, and if Makmour needed arguments to persuade Gintings to ratify the setting up of an OPD, nothing could have served better than this.

The decision being made, the OPD was set up very rapidly and on a large scale. On February 6th, two and a half weeks after Makmour's order went out, the OPD for Kabupaten Deli-Serdang was formally established with about 2,000 members.⁶⁹ The other kabupaten of the residency followed in short order on February 17th and March 3rd: Langkat (4,219 members), Simelungun (4,235 members), Tanah Karo (about 3,000 members) and Labuhan Batu (2,145 members).⁷⁰ Including the estimate for Asahan, this comes to a total of about 17,500 for East Sumatra, a very large number if one keeps in mind that it was about four or five times

66. Unlike Gintings and Sugiharto, Makmour does not seem to have issued any orders to recover arms given to civilians or made any statement that the matter was closed or settled.

67. Late the following year Jusuf Adjitorop put it very concisely: the rakjat were armed to help oust Simbolon; later this was formalized as the OPD. Harian Rakjat, November 15, 1957.

68. William Liddle, "Suku Simalungun; an ethnic group in search of representation," Indonesia, 3, (April, 1967), pp. 16f. says that security was disturbed in Upper Simelungun from Simbolon's coup until 1959 and describes an irregular armed group which operated there during that period.

69. Waspada, February 8, 1957.

70. Cf., respectively, Waspada, February 10, 21; March 7, 9, 1957. There is no report on the founding of the Asahan OPD; I will assume a membership of about 2,000 since it was probably one

the number of regular army men in East Sumatra and Medan put together.

There is very little information about the organization, membership and modus operandi of the OPD. Over-all authority, and presumably the major decisions, rested with Makmour, working through Section V of the regimental staff. Ordinary operations appear to have been directed mainly by the PDM (Perwira Distrik Militer, Military District Officer) for each of the six kabupaten, along with perhaps a civilian coordinator.⁷¹ The chain proceeded downward through the parallel pamong pradja and army territorial hierarchies as far as the kampung level. In principle, OPD members would be given guns only when there was a security threat in their vicinity. Guns were stored, distributed and otherwise controlled by the BODM (Bintara Onder-Distrik Militer, Military Sub-district Non-Commissioned Officers).⁷² To judge from the furor over the distribution of OPD weapons later in the year, however, this rule must have been interpreted very liberally. There is no solid information on what kind of people OPD members were, but we can assume a considerable proportion of former pedjuang, possibly some gerombolan members being resettled into society, and probably large numbers of Sarbupri members.⁷³ This latter question came to the fore in the troubles later in the year.

We can now leave the OPD as it was in the early months of its growth--a substantial force by any standard and an important source of strength for Makmour and his supporters in the military politics of the time.

The other major development during 1957 was the flowering of the East Sumatra provincial autonomy movement. The movement

of the smaller ones. There is a garbled story in PIA, February 15 (M), 1957, which seems to be reporting the establishment of a Residency-wide OPD on February 11th. If so (an advance announcement in Waspada, February 4, 1957, shows that there were plans for a Dewan (Council) and staff at that level) there is no further word on its existence or activities.

71. Waspada, February 8 and 15, 1957. The reports of this period mention coordinators only for the kabupaten of Simelungun and Tanah Karo.
72. Waspada, February 12, 15 and 20, 1957.
73. The idea that Makmour was essentially arming just Sarbupri members was in the air from late December, before the OPD, all the way through late 1957. For some bits of information from the early days of the OPD, see Waspada, February 12, 1957, (where Makmour denies they are all PKI, says it varies from kampung to kampung) and March 13, 1957 (where unspecified political party representatives in Tanah Karo protest unspecified political bias in OPD recruiting). One of the two named civilian coordinators--Kardiman in Simelungun--was a Sobsi official.

rose naturally out of the strong antagonism against the Toba felt among Karo and Simelungun Batak and coastal Malays. It is worth noting, however, that it took concrete form only in September 1956, at a time when it was beginning to seem likely that Simbolon would have to leave and that he would be replaced by Gintings. The new organization was the Kongres Rakjat Sumatera Timur, whose main public goal was the separation of the residencies of East Sumatra and Tapanuli.

There is no evidence as to what the KRST was doing between September and December, but it sprang into action almost immediately after the December coups, which had opened up the political situation and produced what promised to be a very auspicious change of panglimas. Like comparable movements in Riau, Djambi, Atjeh and elsewhere in Indonesia--secondary daerahism, one might call it--the KRST sought, in the first instance, not more freedom from Djakarta, but release from a regional tie which it found disadvantageous. For such movements, indeed, the central government in Djakarta was a potential ally against the larger suku or powerful military commanders in the middle. The KRST thus concentrated its public effort on getting a favorable ruling from Djakarta on its demand for a separate East Sumatra, while trying to maintain enough of a threat of possible direct action on its own behalf to be convincing as a strong local political force. This strategy worked well for Riau and Djambi, and worked so well and rapidly for Atjeh that by mid-1957 it had become a major exponent of primary daerahism. Things were different, as always, in East Sumatra.

The KRST began its campaign on January 14th by sending a large delegation to Djakarta to press its demands. The implied threat behind its appeal was carried in the remarks of the leader of the delegation, Hadji Djaramil Damarik, to supporters who had come to Medan's Polonia airport to see him off. If the delegation returned empty-handed from Djakarta, he said, "It will then be up to the representatives of the people assembled here to decide what steps should be taken."⁷⁴ Undaunted by the failure of this delegation to get immediate results after two weeks in Djakarta, the KRST returned to the attack in March with a large and vocal four-day meeting in Medan attended by some 600 delegates. Denying that it was a "separatist" movement, or motivated by suku sentiments, the meeting once again demanded that East Sumatra be separated from Tapanuli and once again spoke darkly of possible steps it might be forced to take. A few days later a delegation of its leaders pressed its case with Sukarno, who was on a visit

74. See PIA, January 10 (M) and 15 (A), 1957 (names of delegation members), and January 26 (M), 1957 (names of an additional three leaders to represent the KRST in Djakarta). See also Liddle, "Suku Simalungun," p. 13 for biographical information on Damarik.

to Medan.⁷⁵

In July the mood and tempo changed. One sign of this was that the KRST yielded the public stage to its sister organization BAPOST (Badan Penuntut Otonomi Sumatera Timur, Organization for Demanding Autonomy for East Sumatra), which represented the same interests, and shared some of the same leadership, but whose name alone indicated a more militant attitude.⁷⁶ On July 3rd, one day after the government had announced a decree creating six new smaller provinces, the executive committee of BAPOST countered quickly with a statement deploring the omission of East Sumatra from the list.⁷⁷ In a plenary session held between July 18th and 20th, BAPOST went further. Recalling the above-mentioned decree, it suggested ominously that the government seemed to yield autonomy only to groups which used force, and issued an ultimatum of its own: if no success had been achieved within a month, it would not be responsible for the results.⁷⁸ Once again, however, the government stood firm, and once again the threat was not carried out. On August 25th, several days after the ultimatum deadline had passed, BAPOST met again and announced that it had decided to seek autonomy by legal parliamentary ways.⁷⁹

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75. PIA, March 13 (A), 19 (A) and 20 (A), 1957. The latter lists the officers of the KRST: I. Kerani Bukit (Chairman), Kosen Tjokrosentoso (Vice-Chairman) and Mbulgah Sitepu (Secretary-General).
76. There is no information on when BAPOST was formed. The earliest mention of it in the press that I have seen is in PIA, January 7 (M), 1957 (where it is called PAPOST, i.e., Panitya . . .). BAPOST's Secretary-General was Mbulgah Sitepu, who held the same office in the KRST. For a description of the important role played by BAPOST in Simelungun politics in 1957 and after see, Liddle, "Suku Simalungun," pp. 17-18.
77. PIA, July 3 (M), 1957. The six new provinces were West Sumatra, Riau and Djambi, along with three in East Indonesia.
78. PIA, July 24 (M), 1957. The story adds that KRST had not yet commented on the ultimatum, but that it tended to emphasize the legal approach. This is the last mention I have seen of the KRST. I will use the name BAPOST below to cover the whole movement, including the KRST.
79. PIA, August 27 (A), 1957. The failure of these and later threats to get results must be attributed ultimately to the very factor which BAPOST cited in its ultimatum. Djakarta in this period did indeed yield on many points to daerahs which could pose credible threats. The problem was precisely that East Sumatra was too divided to be able to do so.

Needless to say, all this agitation stimulated a response within East Sumatra. The great increase in the activity of the autonomy movement which followed the December coups was accompanied by an equally vigorous campaign of opposition led by a newly created Gerakan Anti-Separatis, in which the PKI and its associated organizations were particularly active.⁸⁰ As its very name promised, GAS attacked the demand for autonomy mainly as a violation of the ideal of national unity. A more interesting subsidiary argument, peculiarly forceful in the light of East Sumatran history, was that BAPOST was organized by leaders of the old federal Negara Sumatera Timur, Dutch puppets who wanted East Sumatran autonomy in order to bring back the old days, when the local sultans collaborated with the plantation syndicates to oppress the people. The day had of course passed for any restoration of Dutch rule, but the charge had something to it, for the social elements which had backed or acquiesced in the old NST did tend to support the autonomy movement. It was a shrewd thrust, stirring up memories of Van Mook and Dr. Mansur, and BAPOST paid testimony to its force by denying the charge frequently and vehemently.⁸¹

Outside East Sumatra, the autonomy movement also roused a strong reaction among non- and anti-Communist Toba Batak. Tapanuli, in this period, produced a Badan Pendukung Keutuhan Sumatera Utara (Body to Support the Integrity of North Sumatra), and this organization agitated vigorously along with already existing Toba and other Tapanuli Batak groupings. Understandably, however, they based their case not on anti-separatism but on the argument that the autonomy movement was based on narrow motives of suku jealousy and reprisal. And certainly they were correct in their charge, for it was the whole point of the autonomy movement to reduce Toba predominance in East Sumatra by cutting them off politically from their base in Tapanuli.⁸²

So far I have described the autonomy question in its "political" aspect. But since Simbolon's coup all politics in East Sumatra had become military politics. Thus at the time of the

80. There is very little information on the early history, leadership and structure of GAS. For examples of early anti-autonomy statements by North Sumatran branches of PKI auxiliaries, see, PIA, January 25 (A), 1957, (BTI-SU) and February 1 (A), 1957 (SOBSI-SU).

81. PIA, January 24 (M) (speech by L. Darman, PKI), March 13 (A) (Marzuki Lubis, PNI) and July 31 (A), 1957 (Amat Sjafei, PKI).

82. It was equally true, of course, that the desire of Toba and other Tapanuli Batak to preserve the existing province was based on their own ethnic interest. For some information on these movements, see PIA, January 17 (A), January 29 (A) and September 8 (A), 1957.

big March meeting of the KRST there were rumors that the TT-I command was planning a coup if the demand for provincial autonomy were not met. There was probably nothing to these rumors--Gintings, even if he had wanted to, was hardly strong enough at the time to contemplate something of this kind--but they suggest the way men were thinking.⁸³ Gintings, in any case, did take the case for autonomy to the Musjawarah Nasional in September and succeeded in extracting a qualified recommendation implying a separation of East Sumatra and Tapanuli.⁸⁴ From this and later evidence, it is clear that Gintings was giving support to the autonomy movement, though he did not commit himself fully to it and seems never to have endorsed it publicly. Makmour took the GAS side and, in this way, another general political issue was caught up in the factional struggle and helped to exacerbate it, with consequences which we shall see in a moment.

One further point needs to be made before we turn to the final crisis in the cycle of events with which this paper is concerned. I have been talking here, and will be later, only about the demand for autonomy itself, a specific issue openly disputed. But the public issue was only the visible part of a larger social issue: what the place of the Toba was now to be under the new dispensation and in a rapidly changing situation. Government positions were also at issue here, and licenses and contracts and access to schools. It would be quite unreasonable to suppose that those active in BAPOST, BPKSU or GAS were interested solely or even primarily in the political geometry of North Sumatra, yet that is virtually all that surfaces in the published sources. In 1957, to give a specific example, Gintings issued a new regulation that school admissions should be handled by a committee of three--the headmaster, a parents' representative and a local official--instead of by the headmaster alone as before. This measure, of course, reduced the power of the headmasters, a large majority of whom were Toba, and its cumulative effect on East Sumatran society was potentially very large indeed. Most supporters of BAPOST would have been very pleased with this and some must have worked for it; yet I have found no mention of it in the press, though there is plenty on the autonomy movement itself.⁸⁵

83. PIA, March 15 (A), 1957. There were similar rumors in October.

84. PIA, September 15 (M), 1957. On a Kementerian Dalam Negeri (Interior Ministry) delegation visiting North Sumatra to investigate the question after the Musjawarah Nasional, see PIA, September 21 (M), October 3 (A) and 9 (A), 1957; also Waspada, September 29, 1957 (BAPOST greeting the delegation with flowers). Nothing came of this possibility for provincial autonomy either.

85. The information is from Herbert Feith.

Below the clamor of the surface events we have been surveying--military detachments with tractors rooting out squatters' plots, loud cries for provincial autonomy and against separatism, military conferences about the control of the OPD--great tides had been moving in East Sumatran society. At the same time, within the army in East Sumatra, influenced by and influencing its environment, a practically silent struggle for power had been going on. One can sense the conditions of this struggle dimly in certain specifically military matters, such as the tram-mels on Gintings' exercise of office, and a bit less dimly in areas where the factional struggle was superimposed on public issues, as with Makmour's building up of the OPD and Gintings' partial but still evident association with the interests behind BAPOST. But it is only really from late July, with the reappearance of open incidents involving military force, that the picture becomes clearer again, and we are able to see some of the results of over half a year of maneuver.

It is clear from the tone of press reports, from evidence that Nasution was paying increasing attention to East Sumatra and even, ironically, from the fact that in mid-July both Gintings and Makmour declared that the army in East Sumatra was free of politics and should remain so,⁸⁶ that things were beginning to come to a head. The first we hear of direct military action is BAPOST's cry of triumph on July 25th, announcing that a number of opponents of the autonomy movement had been arrested for distributing forged letters--evidently real forgeries, to judge from examples published later in the press--purported to come from various members of BAPOST, from Major Munthe and the Sultan of Deli, and from various Dutch interests which were writing big checks to finance BAPOST. One alleged letter offered a large bribe if Gintings would promise to get rid of Makmour and eliminate the OPD--a revealing indication of how the OPD and autonomy issues were tied up together in men's minds with the rivalry between Gintings and Makmour. The names of those arrested were never revealed, though a spokesman for TT-I did say at one point that they included military men as well as civilians. Nor was it stated who did the arresting; it is evident, however, that it was Gintings' side, most likely Gintings himself.⁸⁷

86. PIA, July 17 (A) and 19(A), 1957. They were responding to a dictum to this effect by Nasution. Not long after, at the end of a significantly long (two week) tour of North Sumatra, Nasution again cautioned civilian and military officials in East Sumatra not to involve themselves in the autonomy issue, a clear sign that they were doing so. See PIA, July 31 (M), 1957.

87. On the letters and the arrests see Waspada, August 3, 6, 7, 10 and 17, 1957; PIA, July 25 (A) and 27 (A), August 2 (A), 7 (M) and 12 (M), 1957.

East Coast Residency



Six weeks later, in early September, Makmour responded in kind, arresting the mayor and a number of other prominent people in Tebing Tinggi, some or all of whom were BAPOST supporters.⁸⁸ Makmour's part in this, though not discussed in the press reports, seems straightforward enough. What is interesting is Gintings' role. On September 5th, he mentioned the arrests in the course of a press conference in a way that suggested that he approved of them. On the 23rd, his press officer marked time with a lengthy and evasive statement. On the 25th, the same press officer was suddenly crisp and clear: the arrests were the responsibility of the Second Regiment, not TT-I, and the people had now all been freed.⁸⁹

There was another sign in these same days that showed even more convincingly that the two months of fencing between Gintings and Makmour was coming rapidly to an end. On September 23rd, it was announced that Major A. Manaf Lubis would replace Captain R. T. Ginting as Chief of Staff of the Second Regiment and that Major R. Sjahnan would replace Captain H. R. Asmadi as commander of Battalion 133.⁹⁰ Ginting and Asmadi were both strong supporters of Makmour and their removal, on Nasution's orders, at a time of acute tension between Gintings and Makmour, showed that the tide was beginning to run against the latter.

Gintings' next move brought an abrupt end to the fencing and precipitated a month-long tumult in the army in East Sumatra. On September 28th, he arrested Makmour together with two of his leading supporters in the Second Regiment, Ginting and Lieutenant Gindo Bangko, and at the same time launched a drive to disarm members of the OPD and bring it to order (tertibkan). We cannot be certain how he had managed to improve his position enough to be able to carry off such a bold and open coup, but the evidence suggests that during his stay in Djakarta for the Musjawarah Nasional he had persuaded Nasution to give him strong backing. It was

88. Waspada, September 13 (report of raids and arrests), September 19 (names of seven people arrested), and September 30, 1957 (BAPOST statement mentioning them as its supporters).

89. Waspada, September 6, 24 and 26, 1957. A week earlier Slamet Gintings, a PNI member of the DPR and the most influential Karo politician, sharply criticized the arrests and blamed them on Makmour and the PKI. See PIA, September 22 (M), 1957.

90. Waspada, September 24, 1957. Ginting has been mentioned earlier. Asmadi signed the December 24th Siantar officers' resolution and he led the unit from Battalion 133 which captured the Medan radio station on December 27th. Battalion 133 had its headquarters in Tebingtinggi, and presumably, therefore, made the controversial arrests there earlier in the month.

Nasution, not Gintings, who had transferred Ginting and Asmadi on September 23rd. Gintings returned to Medan from Djakarta on September 24th. The TT-I press officer's much sharper comments on Makmour's Tebingtinggi arrests had appeared on September 25th, and Makmour's arrest three days after that. On September 30th, Nasution sent his Second Deputy, Colonel Ibnu Sutowo, to Medan for lengthy talks with Gintings. When Ibnu Sutowo flew back to Djakarta on October 2nd, he took Makmour with him; while on the same day Gintings announced that Manaf Lubis had replaced Makmour as commander of the Second Regiment. On October 5th, Nasution ordered Ginting and Bangko to Djakarta and on the 8th it was announced that all three had been relieved of their posts on Nasution's orders, and had been assigned to duty in Djakarta. Two months later Makmour was sent off to military school in India. Gintings could hardly have asked for firmer support from his superior than this.⁹¹

He also got strong support from Nasution on the wider and much more delicate question of disarming and reorganizing the OPD. Nasution issued an order to all members of the OPD to turn in their weapons no later than October 5th, and Gintings, supported now by Manaf Lubis, immediately set about putting it into effect.⁹² In four of the six kabupaten in East Sumatra the OPD units obeyed the order and there was either little difficulty or none at all. In Langkat they were balky, but not openly aggressive. But in Simelungun they felt forced to act.⁹³ On October 4th, there was a minor clash; before dawn on the 7th, several hundred OPD members launched a sudden attack on Pematang Siantar and in a few hours of wild firing produced almost the only bloodshed of the whole year of regional crises in Indonesia: half a dozen civilians and two policemen were killed by random shots.⁹⁴

The attack was beaten off and fifty OPD members were captured along with a lot of weapons. But there were still at least 4,000

91. On the whole affair, see: Waspada, September 30, October 1-4, 5 (Asmadi sent to SSKAD), 8, 9 and 16, December 24 and 26 (Makmour to India), 1957; Harian Rakjat, October 4 and 14, 1957; PIA, October 2 (M), 4 (M), 7 (A), 9 (M), 10 (A) and 14 (A), 1957.

92. Nasution's order is given in PIA, October 11 (M), 1957 (it is not stated when it was actually issued). It was first publicly announced by Gintings on October 2nd (Waspada, October 4, 1957). Manaf Lubis made a similar announcement on October 3rd (Waspada, October 12, 1957).

93. For this breakdown of the kabupaten see the October 7th statement by the press officer of TT-I given in Waspada, October 8, 1957.

94. Waspada, October 8, 9, 12 and 14, 1957; PIA, October 9 (M) and 10 (M), 1957. Some sources place the event on October 6th, but the 7th seems to be correct.

OPD people left in Simelungun plus about 6,000 in Langkat and resistance to handing in their weapons and being "brought to order" did not burn itself out with the Pematang Siantar raid.⁹⁵ Nasution continued his strong support to Gintings in handling this problem. On October 9th he was reported by the press officer of TT-I as having issued strict orders for OPD disturbances to be suppressed.⁹⁶ In the four or five weeks that followed, he devoted a great deal of attention to the matter. In fact, it is probably more accurate to say that he took it over entirely from Gintings.

The matter required some attention. Middle and late October saw a patchwork of arrests, minor clashes, exhortations and threats by the army and a number of surrenders. But there were still many weapons outstanding and many OPD members unrepentant in Simelungun at the end of the month.⁹⁷ In Langkat the course of development was much more decorous and the subjection of the OPD advanced somewhat more rapidly, though even here it was far from over by the end of October.⁹⁸ Even in Deli-Serdang, one of the four kabupaten announced as all cleared up on October 8th, there was an incident on October 11th followed by a series of arrests and other measures, and the tone of the news reports makes it clear that the atmosphere continued to be tense.⁹⁹

On October 31st, however, Nasution issued a new and more vigorous ultimatum, giving a ten-day deadline, and threatening

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95. The figure of 6,000 for Langkat is given in Waspada, November 7, 1957. It represents a considerable increase from the figure of 4,219 reported in March. Evidently the OPD was growing beyond its original large size. I have no further information on this obviously significant development.
96. PIA, October 10 (M), 1957. Waspada, October 22, 1957, mentions a Nasution order (date not indicated) to the OPD members involved in the Siantar raid to surrender.
97. Armed incidents are reported in Waspada, October 12, 14 and 16 (two), 1957; and PIA, October 31 (M), 1957. Surrenders are reported in Waspada, October 14 (40 OPD members) and 22, 1957 (surrender of half a ton of hidden bullets and other munitions).
98. Waspada, October 12, 1957 (the press officer of TT-I says that Langkat is now being "brought to order"); PIA, October 13 (M), 1957 (the press officer of TT-I denies that army-OPD tensions are building up in Pangkalan Brandan as in Siantar before October 7th); and Waspada, October 15 and 24, 1957 (in response to reports that the Langkat OPD is reluctant to follow orders from Gintings a spokesman for Nasution declares that an order from Gintings is an order from Nasution and must be obeyed).
99. Waspada, October 5, 16, 18 and 28, November 1, 1957.

serious military operations if the arms were not handed in by that time.¹⁰⁰ Perhaps it was this ultimatum which did the trick, or perhaps it was some understanding reached by negotiations--Nasution met with the civilian coordinators of the Simelungun and Langkat OPD on October 28th, and met again with the Simelungun coordinator, Kardiman, on November 8th, just before the deadline expired.¹⁰¹ At any rate, the ultimatum was followed by rapid changes. In a ceremony at Bindjai on November 6th, 301 members of the Langkat OPD reported back for duty under army control, turning in 161 weapons.¹⁰² On November 10th, there was a much larger ceremony of the same sort at Siantar for 1,584 members of the Simelungun OPD at which Manaf Lubis and Kardiman spoke.¹⁰³ In his speech Manaf Lubis announced that 90% of the weapons signed out to OPD members in East Sumatra had been turned in.¹⁰⁴ Though the year ended with some arms still outstanding, the possibility that the OPD would entrench itself in East Sumatra under a leadership hostile to Nasution or Gintings had faded.¹⁰⁵

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100. Waspada, October 31 and November 5, 1957. The latter reports that on October 31st 10,000 leaflets with Nasution's letter to the OPD were dropped by plane, mostly on Simelungun and Langkat. No source offers the text of Nasution's letter.
101. Waspada, October 31 and November 9, 1957. On November 9th, Subandi, OPD coordinator of Ketjamatan Panei at Panei Tengah in Simelungun, talked with Gintings. Gintings agreed to release five imprisoned OPD members per day--presumably as part of a deal to facilitate the surrender of OPD members who had still not turned in their weapons (Harian Rakjat, November 22, 1957).
102. Waspada, November 7, 1957. The arms included three bren guns, and one mortar. There were very amiable speeches by the civilian coordinator for Langkat (Totong Harahap) and the commander of Battalion 139 (Captain Maliki). The latter's speech sounds as if he did not approve of the penertiban, as might be expected of a stout Makmour supporter that he was. See further below on both of these speeches.
103. Waspada, November 11, 1957, has a fine description of this occasion, giving the impression that for the individual OPD member present it was less a political event than a holiday. See also Waspada, November 14, 1957, and PIA, November 12 (M), 1957.
104. The same day, a spokesman for Nasution gave the following breakdown: 60% of registered weapons had been returned in Simelungun, 90% in Langkat, and 100% in the other four kabupaten (Harian Rakjat, November 11, 1957).
105. Waspada, November 16, (Manaf Lubis urges the rest of the OPD in Simelungun Atas to come in); November 29 (the press officer of TT-I states that only a few Simelungun OPD members have

What was this large, long-drawn-out and intricate episode about? One thing which is implicit in what I have already said about the disarming and reorganization of the OPD is that it was closely tied up with the factional struggle among the East Sumatra military. Bringing the OPD back under control was an integral part of Gintings' attack on Makmour. The OPD raid on Pematang Siantar followed within a week of Makmour's fall in a situation suddenly opened up again by that drastic event. Other information suggests an even more direct connection. One of the first things done by TT-I after the raid was to place First Lieutenant Tarumon, the officer coordinating the OPD, under detention.¹⁰⁶ In the same period, the press officer of TT-I pointedly called attention to the fact that the arms used by the OPD members in the raid had been distributed by Makmour; at a press conference Gintings refused to say whether any army officers had been involved in the incident but hinted that it was connected with the earlier arrests of Makmour and the others; and Nasution a few days later gave the same hint.¹⁰⁷ These particles of information suggest the possibility that one or more pro-Makmour officers had a hand in the Siantar raid, just as Captain Maliki's above-mentioned remarks at the Bindjai ceremony on November 6th suggest that other pro-Makmour officers who remained in good standing disapproved of the disarming of the OPD. At any rate, it is clear that one cannot understand this episode without taking account of parallel developments in the military factional struggle.

A second way of looking at the OPD episode is in terms of PKI involvement in the OPD. On October 12th, the Medan newspaper Tjerdas struck a note very common in the anti-PKI press when it headlined a story on the Siantar raid "PKI Gagal dengan Madiun Affairnja ke-II" (PKI Fails with its Second Madiun Affair).¹⁰⁸ During this same period, the North Sumatra PNI turned sharply against the PKI. On October 22nd, the party declared that the recent disorders had been engineered by the PKI through the OPD, and, on November 11th, Slamet Gintings reiterated the

not reported back. The picture he gives suggests that the holdouts have in effect become a gerombolan); and December 23, 1957 (Manaf Lubis says that 99% of the Simelungun OPD have now reported back).

106. PIA, October 9 (M), 1957, and Waspada, October 12, 1957.

The sources do not say whether his job covered just Simelungun or all of East Sumatra. There is no other information on him.

107. See, respectively, PIA, October 11 (M), 1957; Waspada, October 9, 1957 and also PIA, October 9 (M), 1957; and Waspada, October 17, 1957.

108. Quoted in Harian Rakjat, October 17, 1957. The Tjerdas story goes on to link the name of a Simelungun PKI leader with the raid.

point in the DPR, adding the assertion that Makmour had collaborated closely with Kardiman in developing the OPD as a political tool.¹⁰⁹ These charges rested on certain undeniable facts. There were certainly substantial numbers of Sarbupri members in the OPD, and PKI, SOBSI, and especially Sarbupri leaders, played important roles as OPD coordinators and the like. Apart from Kardiman, the press in this period reported numerous examples of PKI office-holders in the OPD disappearing for a time and under investigation for complicity in OPD resistance.¹¹⁰ The PKI itself testified to the accuracy of some of these factual statements and to the embarrassing position it found itself in, by taking a very defensive line throughout this period. Its basic defence was that if it were true that there were many PKI members in the OPD, this only showed that they were in the forefront of the struggle to preserve the unity of the Republic and prevent the restoration of the old NST--an argument which in effect admitted the existence of many PKI OPD members and tried to justify it.¹¹¹ In this defensive vein, the PKI and its associated organizations in Djakarta and Medan repeatedly enjoined their members during this period to be careful what they did, to resist provocation and to cooperate closely with the military, for example by turning in their weapons, if they happened to be OPD members.¹¹²

A full analysis of PKI policy and motives in this case would take us into questions of national-level politics beyond the bounds of this paper. For our purposes, it is sufficient to note that the undoubted importance of Sarbupri and other PKI members in the OPD does not necessarily indicate that the local or national level PKI really viewed the OPD as a means of taking power in East Sumatra. It looks far more as if PKI activity in the OPD was an effort to gain limited advantages from the changing local situation. Nor does the common involvement of Makmour and PKI groups in the OPD require that they have had common purposes in so doing; all we can be certain of is that they saw some profit in tactical cooperation. Finally, the participation of some PKI members in the Siantar raid and the intransigence of the OPD generally does not necessarily mean that this was part of

109. See, respectively, PIA, November 5 (A) and 12 (M), 1957.

110. See the examples given in Waspada, October 7, 15, 26, 28 and November 1, 1957; also PIA, October 21 (M), 1957, for information on Djintan Purba, who was a leader of Sarbupri, OPD and GAS in Simelungun.

111. See Harian Rakjat, October 19, 1957, for a typical rendering of this argument.

112. Examples of such instructions occur in Harian Rakjat, October 10, 17 and 18, 1957.

central PKI policy at all. Quite the contrary, the general attitude of the Djakarta leadership, reflected in the pages of Harian Rakjat in this period, suggests apprehension and even some perplexity about what the local membership up there in East Sumatra might be doing. We cannot forget that PKI members in East Sumatra had their own and East Sumatran, as well as PKI, reasons for their actions, and that the former may have been decisive in this affair.

This leads to a third and final point. In reading through the record of the army handling of the OPD episode in October and November one is struck by how careful and conciliatory it was, despite fairly substantial arrests and threats of large military operations. Deadlines were repeatedly extended, negotiations were constantly held and there was practically no patrolling or shooting against what were, after all, technically insurgent groups. The army, moreover, showed a judicious regard throughout for the interests of OPD members. Its statements laid heavy emphasis on the fact that the OPD was not going to be abolished, but simply reorganized, and its possession of weapons put on a stricter basis.¹¹³ One passing reference indicates that the army was paying a bounty ("honorarium") to OPD members coming back into the fold.¹¹⁴ The atmosphere of conciliation is suggested in the remarks of the civilian coordinator for Langkat at a ceremony on November 6th, celebrating the return of the 301 OPD members to the fold. He said that he hoped the security of OPD members would be properly guaranteed, and went on to make various suggestions or demands--hardly the tone of a humble rebel grateful for an amnesty.

This could be put down to cultural characteristics, and explained as a very "Indonesian" way of handling a situation of this kind. But another more interesting possibility exists: the army treated the OPD with great delicacy in October and November because by that time the OPD had become something of a social movement with a life of its own, apart from the original intentions of its creators and managers, Makmour and some of his officers, some local PKI leaders, and perhaps some pamongpradja. It is hard to characterize the sources of this social movement because the newspaper material naturally concentrates on the actions and motives of its managers, but one can make a few suggestions. The strong emphasis in army field information materials on the fact that the OPD was not to be disbanded, only reorganized, suggests that membership was valued for itself regardless of who was managing the organization and for what purposes.

113. Examples of this appear very early on, in Waspada, October 5, and also 8, 16 and November 16, 1957.

114. Waspada, October 15, 1957. This payment, in Langkat, was said to be in accordance with Nasution's orders, thus, presumably, general policy.

Membership brought with it some tangible, but chiefly, I would guess, intangible benefits: recognition for pedjuang, hope of some kind of social mobility for younger men, and some increased security, status and prestige for all. These were threatened by the sudden order to turn in one's weapons, and this perceived threat produced the Siantar raid--which looks so futile and irrational when seen from above--and the intransigence of the following weeks.

This way of looking at the OPD episode implies, of course, that there is yet another vantage point from which to observe the events covered by this paper. There are not only the Djakarta and Medan points of view, but also what one might call the rural East Sumatra perspective. The parallel is not exact because the shift from Medan to rural East Sumatra involves not only a change of geographical location and level of organization (as in the shift from Djakarta to Medan), but also a descent from elite into folk history. But the same point can be made and a more exact parallel can be found if one asks why it was that the OPD episode took so different a course in Simelungun and Langkat from the course it followed in the other four kabupaten. Clearly, for one thing, a special situation prevailed in Simelungun. Clearly, too, for the historian of Simelungun, Medan is just as much a center, with its own broader but shallower perspective, as Djakarta is for Medan.¹¹⁵ There is a hierarchy of historical perspectives here; in this paper I am taking only one of several possible steps downward when I move my vantage point from Djakarta to Medan.

One might have supposed, sitting in Medan in early October 1957 and seeing Gintings' apparently effortless expulsion of Makmour and the brisk beginning of the drive to disarm the OPD, that Gintings had come out on top. Within a few weeks, however, he was tottering on the brink of a fall. The storm actually broke on October 19th, but two earlier incidents foretold its coming.

The first was the Siantar OPD raid on October 7th, an unusual and disturbing challenge to established authority, especially Gintings', and a sign of unmanageable forces at work just below the surface. The other was a curious incident on October 8th, in which troops of Sector FF directly confronted Gintings. These troops, originating from East Sumatra, had been sent to Atjeh four years earlier at the beginning of Daud Beureueh's insurrection and had been stationed in the kabupaten of East Atjeh, which for operational purposes was labelled Sector FF. When Sjamaun Gaharu established his autonomous KDM Atjeh in January 1957 and set about getting the army in Atjeh

115. This comes out clearly in Liddle's "Suku Simalungun."

back into Atjehnese hands, there was inevitable friction with Sector FF.¹¹⁶ In late January 1957, Captain Jusuf, the commander of Sector FF, declared it independent of KDM Atjeh and now directly under the panglima of TT-I. Gaharu, who had just unilaterally freed himself from TT-I, blandly contended that Jusuf's unilateral declaration was intolerable and took his case to Djakarta. By August, he had partly won. On the 20th, the East Atjeh sector was incorporated into KDM Atjeh, and in early September, Jusuf and his troops, a battalion strong, were returned to East Sumatra.

The troops were stationed temporarily in Medan, assigned to the KMKB, while the military authorities tried to decide what to do with them. The barracks were inadequate, there were rumors that the unit was to be disbanded, Jusuf disappeared, and it was rumored that he had been arrested. All this was too much for the men; on October 8th two companies of Sector FF troops, fully armed, came to TT-I headquarters to protest. Gintings managed to calm them with promises and they went away, but remained resentful. On the other hand, what was actually a flagrant breach of discipline remained unpunished.¹¹⁷

Eleven days later Medan witnessed still another coup, subsequently known as the October 19th Affair. It began at 8:30 on the morning of the 19th, when Sector FF troops surrounded the TT-I headquarters in Medan. They were soon joined by tanks from the divisional cavalry squadron and the divisional CPM (military police) battalion, both commanded by Javanese.¹¹⁸ Two hours later, three officers of Gintings' faction--Majors Nelang Sembiring (Deputy Chief of Staff), Zein Hamid (Head of Staff Section I) and Lahiradja Munthe (Head of Staff Section IV)--were escorted out of the headquarters by Major Sukardi, the commander of the CPM battalion, were taken to the airport and flown out to Djakarta.

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116. This friction was exacerbated by the fact that much of the population of East Atjeh was ethnically non-Atjehnese and thus presumably looked on the Sector FF troops as some insurance against Gaharu's increasingly successful Atjehnese movement. Newspaper reports, however, carry only faint hints of this kind of sentiment.
117. The main sources on Sector FF are Waspada, January 29, August 20 and 23, September 11 and October 9, 1957.
118. Waspada, November 9, 1957. Since July, the commander of the divisional cavalry squadron was Captain R. A. Muljono. According to an informant who participated in these events, there were two other units involved in the action against Gintings along with the ones mentioned above: the divisional artillery unit and Battalion 131, commanded by Major Henry Siregar.

Meanwhile, two announcements were broadcast over the Medan radio, at 9:15 and 10:30 a.m., by spokesmen claiming to represent the NCO's and enlisted men of TT-I. These statements condemned Gintings for causing tension in the area by his arrest of Makmour, Ginting and Bangko, and declared that, to avoid a vacuum of authority, Sugiharto had been chosen to command TT-I. At 11:00, there was an announcement from division headquarters saying that command was now held by Sugiharto.

The action of the coup was not confined to the TT-I headquarters building. Tanks and military pickets, reported to be from KMKB Medan, were placed throughout the city at strategic places. A heavy guard was also placed about Gintings' house, but he managed to escape and went to an unrevealed hiding place outside Medan, possibly Brastagi. When Prime Minister Djuanda arrived at the airport later in the day, on a previously scheduled visit to discuss the question of a separate East Sumatra province, Gintings was not there to greet him. Sugiharto was.¹¹⁹

Such was the course of the coup. All the rest, up to the final settlement in mid-December, was negotiation, and decisions by the Army Chief of Staff. Nasution wasted no time flying up to Medan early on October 20th. Over the next few days, he stabilized the situation by a series of quick moves. In a radio broadcast that same evening, he declared that it was intolerable for a panglima to be ousted by his subordinates by armed force, and made it clear that Gintings was still panglima. The next day he brought Lieutenant-Colonel Hasan Kasim back from TT-II in Palembang to serve once again as Acting Chief of Staff of TT-I. On the 22nd, he announced that Sembiring, Hamid and Munthe would remain in Djakarta; Sembiring would be replaced by Major Boyke Nainggolan and the other two by their deputies.¹²⁰ On the 23rd, a unit from the RPKAD (Army Paratroop Regiment) arrived in Medan, technically assigned to Gintings as panglima.¹²¹ On the same

119. The main narrative account of the coup and the weeks following is Djuanda's statement to the DPR on November 8th (text in PIA, November 8 (A) and 9 (A), 1957). See also Waspada, October 22 and 23, November 9, 1957; PIA, October 21 (M, A), 22 (M), 1957; and Harian Rakjat, October 22, 1957. One report says that Sugiharto handed Djuanda a letter at the airport, after which Djuanda was quoted as saying that Sugiharto had reported a serious new development in the area (PIA, October 21 (M), 1957).

120. Waspada, October 23, 1957. The two deputies are not named in this report. Hamid's replacement was either Captain Langlang Buwana (PIA, October 23 (M), 1957) or Captain Sinulingga (Djuanda, in the DPR, November 8) or conceivably these two in succession. Djuanda has Captain Muluk Lubis replacing Munthe.

121. Waspada, October 23, 1957. This decision was announced by Nasution on October 22nd, but circumstances delayed their

day, Nasution, in another radio broadcast, declared that the first stage of settling the problem had been completed and that the second stage would come soon; he also ordered all troops confined to barracks for the time being and forbade army men to arm civilians, or to disarm, shoot at or arrest one another.¹²² On the 24th, Gintings returned to Medan, past sealed off roads, through empty streets heavily guarded by RPKAD troops, and appeared in the guise of panglima at a formal gathering in the Governor's office, presided over by Nasution.¹²³ This final ceremony accomplished, Nasution flew off to Djakarta, promising to return soon, and leaving Ibnu Sutowo behind to represent him.¹²⁴

There is no need to go deeply into what Nasution called the second stage of his solution to the crisis. The problem, from his point of view, was to find a combination of officers for the leading positions in TT-I--especially the four offices vacated during the coup--who would run TT-I under his overall direction and not be at each others' throats the moment he left town. The method he employed to resolve the crisis was a long-drawn-out series of conferences and private talks, almost round-the-clock between October 28th and November 8th, when Djuanda made his DPR statement on the Affair, and fairly frequently in the weeks that followed.¹²⁵ The result, revealed in a series

arrival until the next day.

122. Waspada, October 24, 1957; PIA, October 24 (M), 1957. The troops were apparently kept confined to barracks until the end of October (see Nasution's press conference on November 1st, reported in Harian Rakjat, November 2, 1957). On the 24th, a spokesman for Nasution had no comment on reports that civilians had been armed during the October 19th coup (PIA, October 25 (M), 1957). There are no other reports on the arming of civilians; thus, although there was presumably some distribution of weapons, it was evidently not very extensive and was quickly stopped.
123. Waspada, October 25, 1957. He left Medan again the next day and stayed away thereafter (Harian Rakjat, October 29 and 31, 1957). Soon we find a spokesman for Nasution saying that Gintings was on leave outside Medan in order to relax after going through the recent tensions (PIA, October 30 (M), 1957).
124. Waspada, October 25, 1957. Other stories on the first stage of the settlement, not cited so far, are in Waspada, October 21, 22, 26 and 30, 1957.
125. Nasution himself was in East Sumatra between October 28th and November 1st, on November 6th and 7th, a day or two around November 16th, and finally between December 17th and 19th. Relays of high-ranking Army Headquarters officers succeeded Ibnu Sutowo in his guardian role at TT-I headquarters at

of formal transfers of office on December 18th and 19th, differed little from the constellation sketched in on October 23rd and 24th. Nothing was said about Gintings and Sugiharto, who remained in their old jobs. Hasan Kasim remained as divisional Chief of Staff. Boyke Nainggolan was sworn in as Deputy Chief of Staff and also as head of Staff Section I, thus replacing both Nelang Sembiring and Zein Hamid, who were inducted into lesser jobs in TT-I. Muluk Lubis was sworn in as head of Staff Section IV, replacing Lahiradja Munthe, who remained in Djakarta, assigned to Army Headquarters. Manaf Lubis was inaugurated as Commander of the Second Regiment as well as its Chief of Staff (his original position on September 25th). Wahab Makmour, as mentioned above, went to military school in India a few days later; nothing was said about the fate of R. T. Ginting.¹²⁶

So much for the main course of events. We can now turn to the how and why of the October 19th Affair. In the conditions which prevailed during the first half of the 1950's, it was possible for Simbolon to maintain hegemony over the large, old TT-I. But, during 1956, the basis of that hegemony was undermined, and the coups of late December 1956 destroyed it overnight. TT-I then broke up into separate fragments: KDM Sumatera Tengah, KDM Atjeh, a largely autonomous Third Regiment, and even Sector FF, for a moment. In these cases, the break-up of the old unit was along natural geographic or suku lines of cleavage. Inside East Sumatra the social situation was more complex, and any simple fragmentation was impossible. What developed instead--and developed very rapidly in response to the same conditions which produced the KDM Atjeh and the other autonomous fragments--was a set of military factions: Gintings', Makmour's and Sugiharto's, with Simbolon's being pushed out to a position neatly corresponding to the ambiguities in the relation between Tapanuli and East Sumatra. At their birth, these factions were nicely balanced but Gintings' coup against Makmour upset the equilibrium. It raised the possibility, or threat, of a renewed hegemony over East Sumatra by a single leader and his faction. This went very much against the grain in East Sumatra, as it was then, and it is this fact, I think, which accounts for the swift reply to Gintings in the October 19th coup.

These observations describe a context, not particular actors with particular motives. We cannot be quite certain about who organized the coup because the published sources are silent on this question. Djuanda and Nasution said nothing

least up to late November.

126. Waspada, December 18-20, 1957. On November 8th, Djuanda revealed in the DPR that Nasution had ordered the Sector FF troops and Captain Jusuf to go to Central Java for further training (PIA, November 9 (A), 1957. See also Waspada, November 13, 1957, reporting their departure).

about it. No one came forward, as men did the previous December, to say that he was involved; the press did not discuss the matter.¹²⁷ Nevertheless, it seems fairly clear that the initiative for the coup came from Sugiharto, or at least from others acting on his behalf with his knowledge--which amounts to almost the same thing. He was declared panglima by the actors in the coup, though, of course, that does not necessarily mean that he planned it. It is hard to see who else in TT-I at the time had sufficient stature to lead a coup against Gintings.¹²⁸ The five units involved in the actual coup were all from Medan, Sugiharto's territory, and, of these, two (cavalry and artillery) had been associated with him in the Sapta Marga Operation, another (CPM) was also commanded by a non-Sumatran, and two (Sector FF and Battalion 131) were assigned to KMKB Medan. Finally, the proclamation of Sugiharto as panglima by a group of NCO's and enlisted men has the look of a put-up job, and the picture of Sugiharto at the airport, informing Djuanda of important developments, is most convincing when read as the discreet presentation of a fait accompli.

Assuming that it was Sugiharto who organized the coup, one must ask what his motives were and who was behind him. As far as he himself was concerned, plain ambition or reluctance to come under too strong a panglima was presumably an important motive. He controlled Medan militarily, as he demonstrated on October 19th, and Medan was the key to East Sumatra. With Gintings' strength growing, perhaps now was the time to act. More broadly, one can see the basis for a tacit alliance between Nasution and Sugiharto's faction--non-Sumatran commanders of key units in Medan--in opposition to a locally-based panglima threatening to grow too big. The aftermath of the coup, as we shall see, is fully consistent with this interpretation.

Gintings, of course, was not simply locally-based; he was specifically a Karo. A potential Gintings-Karo hegemony necessarily affected the interests of the non-Karo in East Sumatra, most obviously the two largest groups of these, the Toba and the Javanese. It is worth noting that the PKI soon charged that army officers from Gintings' faction, including the three who were sent off to Djakarta on the day of the coup, had plotted with the PNI leader Slamet Gintings to proclaim a separate East Sumatra province on October 20th.¹²⁹ The specific charge may

127. The one exception that I know of is Waspada, October 23, 1957, which says that Sugiharto tried to supplant Gintings.

128. One looks naturally to the commander of the Second Regiment. But Manaf Lubis, though he had been active in East Sumatra during the revolution, had been away from TT-I for some time, most recently in SSKAD. In any case he had been only a few weeks in office. There are no indications that he played much of a role in the military politics of late 1957.

129. Harian Rakjat, November 15, 1957 (Jusuf Adjitorop in the DPR). This contention served to justify the October 19th

not have been true--there is no other evidence for it--but there is no doubt that high feeling on both sides of this issue, and suku tension generally, were important in the background of the October 19th coup. Thus one finds the Toba commander of Battalion 131, Henry Siregar, joining the otherwise quite alien Sugiharto faction in the action of the coup.¹³⁰

The October 19th Affair had important consequences in TT-I, though they were more purely military and, even in that respect, less sweeping than the changes which followed Simbolon's coup ten months earlier. It is clear, to begin with, that Gintings emerged from the Affair with severely diminished authority. He was forced to flee and was later restored, not by his own actions, but by Nasution's intervention. He spent all but a few days of the next four weeks outside Medan, reported variously as on sick leave, vacationing and inspecting. He does not seem to have resumed the actual functions of his office until late November or early December. The formal transfers of office in mid-December, which marked the end of the Affair, closed with a spokesman for Nasution refusing to comment on reports that Gintings would be transferred from TT-I and saying that anything could happen.¹³¹

One of the corollaries of Gintings' weakened position was that Nasution greatly strengthened his own hold on TT-I. He was able to re-impose Gintings in a situation in which military strength lay, for the time being at least, on the other side. He re-installed Lt. Col. Hasan Kasim, an outsider and a personal representative of his, as Acting Chief of Staff. He was able to bring in the RPKAD troops, who were not connected with or controllable by any of the local officers.¹³² Finally, he

action as a pre-emptive coup. Slamet Gintings and the PNI-SU countered with charges that the PKI was behind all the recent disturbances in East Sumatra, the October 19th coup as well as the Siantar raid and the Sector FF incident.

130. This distinction is emphasized by the participant informant mentioned in note 118. Djuanda's list of the factors lying behind the Affair included the East Sumatra province issue and tension between Javanese and Karo in East Sumatra (See PIA, November 9 (A), 1957 and Harian Rakjat, November 9, 1957). The latter, something one hears little about in other reports of events during 1957, suggests that one might look on Sugiharto's group as at least partly a suku-based faction representing the interests of local Javanese.

131. Waspada, December 21, 1957.

132. On October 22nd, the day before the RPKAD arrived, Nasution took the trouble to deny that their coming had anything to do with the recent events in Medan. But a truer picture of what this move signified was given the same day in a statement by the IPRI (Ikatan Perwira RI--Indonesian Officers'

completely dominated the negotiations by which the Affair was settled.

Another corollary of Gintings' decline was that Sugiharto seems to have maintained his position unaffected. It is true that Nasution spoke bluntly against the idea of ousting commanders by force, a sentiment which in the circumstances might seem to be addressed to Sugiharto. But he made no direct mention of Sugiharto in this connection and seems not to have punished his violation of discipline in any way.¹³³ More concretely, Nasution confirmed the ouster of three of Gintings' most prominent supporters. Finally, he either arranged or agreed to accept Gintings being kept away from the seat of power for a month, while Sugiharto remained at the center of things in Medan. It seems as clear a case of favoring one side as his support of Gintings against Makmour in late September.

The last corollary of Gintings' decline is the most ironic, and takes us part of the way back to the beginning of the cycle of coups which we have been surveying. This is the clear evidence that the Toba faction within the army in East Sumatra, in eclipse since the Sapta Marga Operation, was reviving. With the participation of Henry Siregar's battalion in the October 19th coup against Gintings and with the reappearance of Siregar's former commander, Boyke Nainggolan, as third in command of TT-I, the basis for Nainggolan's March 16, 1958, raid on Medan had already come into being. We stand at the beginning of another round of military politics, new and yet familiar from the events we have been studying.¹³⁴

Association) of the Second Regiment declaring that they were opposed to the bringing in of outside troops (PIA, October 23 (M), 1957). Early in November the Army press officer in Djakarta made it yet clearer when he said that the RPKAD would be withdrawn as soon as the military problems in TT-I had been solved (PIA, November 2 (M), 1957).

133. But Sugiharto did find it necessary to make two rather meek statements on October 21st. One was a personal statement that the whole affair was in Nasution's hands to solve. The other was a statement of the local branch of IPRI, signed by Sugiharto, denying any knowledge of the broadcasts on the 19th which had proclaimed him panglima. (PIA, October 22 (M), 1957). Djuanda reports the second of these statements but says that it was made in the early afternoon of October 19th. It looks as if Djuanda pushed it back to the 19th in order to make it seem as if Sugiharto was acting promptly and spontaneously and thus was not involved in the coup. If he is correct, however, we might have to revise our notion of the degree of Sugiharto's involvement in the coup.

134. To be sure Nainggolan's raid was only a brief foray and Gintings managed to push Sugiharto out of TT-I in the

It begins to be clear that what we have been looking at is not a series of disputes culminating in a solution of some sort but rather the inevitable and endless oscillation of power in a region of more or less evenly-balanced ethnic, religious and economic interests, intrinsically hostile to each other and no longer held in check by a national government embodying a national consensus. From this point of view, the successes and failures among the coups and other actions we have been examining have been mere accidents of circumstances, ephemeral because they could not permanently decide the fundamental conflicts of interest in the area.

Military politics, like other kinds of politics, can be studied on their own, and this study can be absorbing in its own right. It seems to me, however, that such study is always more successful when it is closely related to the social context within which military politics takes place. In the present state of scholarly knowledge of modern Indonesian politics this means that such study is more likely to be successful, the more local or restricted its focus--down, for example, to where one can begin to think of the OPD as a social movement and not a problem, or, better still, down to where one can actually see it working on its own level. In this respect, as with regard to the perspective implications of different vantage points, Medan is just a half-way house.

same month, so that he enjoyed something approaching hegemony over TT-I for a considerable period thereafter. But this was in the special conditions prevailing during the PRRI rebellion, with many outside troops and much Djakarta interest in the area.